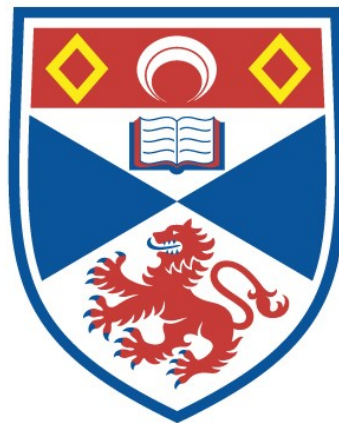


**NO LASTING CITY : ROME, JERUSALEM AND THE
PLACE OF HEBREWS IN THE HISTORY OF
EARLIEST 'CHRISTIANITY'**

Carl Mosser

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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*No Lasting City:
Rome, Jerusalem and the Place of Hebrews in the History
of Earliest 'Christianity'*

A thesis submitted
in application for the degree

Ph.D. in New Testament

St Mary's College,
University of St Andrews

by
Carl Mosser

St Andrews, Scotland
5 November 2004



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Abstract

The contemporary study of Hebrews is bedeviled by anachronistic assumptions that distort its interpretation. As a result, Hebrews holds a paradoxical position in contemporary New Testament scholarship. After two centuries of critical study little progress has been made on core introductory issues related to this epistle. Consequently, many scholars are hesitant to utilize it significantly for investigation into the origin and early development of Christianity. In contrast, Hebrews specialists generally agree that Hebrews is a sermon that was sent to a group of Christians in Rome. Some scholars even utilize it as a primary datum in the investigation of Roman Christianity.

This thesis consists of a ground-clearing exercise and prolegomena for reexamining the place of Hebrews in early Christian history. It begins by arguing that Hebrews should not be read as a document of early Christianity, a religion separate from Judaism, but as a document of Second Temple Judaism. It then assesses the arguments for locating the recipients in Rome. When the evidence is subjected to critical scrutiny we find that it precludes an Italian location. Likewise, the arguments against locating the readers in Palestine fail and the evidence actually points in that direction. Finally, the idea that Hebrews is a sermon is disproved and new insight is gained into the situation that the epistle addresses. Significantly, we find that the reference to a "word of exhortation" in 13:22 refers to an oracle received by the readers which they were hesitant to obey.

The positive argument contends that Hebrews was sent to Jerusalem. New exegetical insight into Rahab's commendation (11:31) gives strong support to this contention. Additional support comes from the Temple Scroll, 4QMMT and other Jewish texts which help prove that *camp* in 13:13-14 is a legal term of art that refers to Jerusalem. These texts also help us see that the "strange teachings" in 13:9 refer to halakhic innovations related to sacrifice. The readers reside in Jerusalem and are urged to leave the city before it is destroyed.

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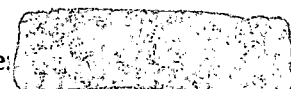
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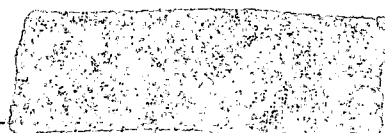
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**Dedicated with sincere gratitude
for support that made this work possible**

**to
Dr. Benjamin D. Powell, Jr. and Miss Martha Powell,
in memory of their mother Mrs. Elsie Powell**

**and to
Robert J Housel, Jr.**

Thank you.

Acknowledgements

The seminal ideas which led to this thesis occurred to me on a Saturday morning during my final year of undergraduate study at LIFE Bible College (now Life Pacific College) when I decided to read Hebrews through in one sitting, possibly for the first time. A couple of years later I began work on an M.A. thesis at Talbot School of Theology in which I hoped to reinvestigate the background of Hebrews and dispel some common misconceptions about the epistle. That was abandoned when it became clear that the project I wanted to do was far too involved for a master's thesis. I set the topic aside with the hope that I might return to it as a doctoral dissertation.

By the time I was prepared to apply for doctoral programs I had spent a couple of years pursuing degrees in the philosophy of religion. I was torn about whether to continue in that discipline or biblical studies. My wife Elisabeth, however, was not. She believed that my ideas on Hebrews were compelling and significant enough that they should be argued in detail. She insisted that I pursue a doctorate that would allow me to focus my research on this topic. If anyone finds the ideas presented and defended in this thesis helpful, they owe Elisabeth their thanks. I owe her my sincere thanks for much more besides. As a wife and mother she worked hard in many mundane ways to facilitate my research. She was patient, persevering and encouraging throughout. She was and is my joy.

I owe Professor Richard Bauckham my gratitude for accepting me as a student and giving me a chance to argue my case even though he was initially skeptical. He was immensely patient—perhaps too patient—as I pursued various projects in addition to my thesis. His keen eye saved me from several embarrassing mistakes and I have benefited immensely from discussions with him and his own scholarship. Unfortunately, he took ill before the final chapter drafts came together and was unable to continue supervision.

A special word of thanks must go to Professor Philip Esler for taking over as my supervisor in the middle of my final year. I was initially wary, fearful that we might clash on critical issues or that he would push me to revamp my project into a social-scientific investigation. But he proved extremely gracious and accommodating. Our first conversation helped me to clarify and better articulate some key ideas and the thesis is much stronger for that. He read each chapter in close detail, catching many errors and offering numerous helpful suggestions. Moreover, he returned my work very promptly, usually within a day or two of turning it in. No one wants to change supervisors in the final stages of a doctorate, but Philip made what could have been a hard situation into a very positive experience.

Lastly, I owe my sincere thanks to those named in the dedication. Their financial and moral support were instrumental in allowing me to pursue this research.

Abbreviations

The abbreviation system used in this thesis is that found in Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). On occasion abbreviations are employed for works not listed there. These include the following.

ECDSS	Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
JHC	<i>Journal of Higher Criticism</i>
DSSR	Dead Sea Scrolls Reader
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

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Chapter One

The Intractable Riddle

That Strange Old Epistle to the Hebrews

The students in the seminary class were required to write an exegetical paper and then a sermon on a biblical text. Each student would be assigned a different text, and the selections would be made from across the canon. Fearful that they would be given a passage from 1 or 2 Chronicles, the story of Balaam's ass or some other obscure or difficult part of the Old Testament, students anxiously waited for the list assigning their texts to be posted. As soon as it was up they gathered around to discover their fates. Some walked away pleased, others somber. A third-year student approaching graduation was particularly distressed. "Damn it," he said, "mine is from Hebrews. I really wanted a New Testament text."¹

Sentiments like this are sometimes said in irony but this student appears to have been genuinely mistaken. While one occasionally hears laypersons make this mistake, it is unusual for third-year seminarians to do so. This student's story could be cited to illustrate biblical illiteracy, the quality of candidates for pastoral ministry or slipping academic standards in some seminaries. But the student's response, even if it had been ironic, also points to something important about Hebrews: *it is not like the rest of the New Testament*. It is not a gospel, a history or a revelation of end time

¹ This story is adapted from L. Gregory Jones, "Embodying Scripture in the Community of Faith," *The Art of Reading Scripture* (ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 143. I owe this reference to Alasdair I. Macleod.

events. It does not read like the familiar epistles attributed to Paul. In many ways it bears more similarity with Leviticus and Numbers than it does with anything else in the New Testament. The epistle conspires to fool the biblically illiterate. Indeed, except for references to Jesus, Hebrews would not strike many average readers as being out of place if it were assigned to the Old Testament.²

With the possible exception of Revelation, Hebrews more than any other NT document forcefully confronts modern readers with the temporal and cultural distance that lies between them and the first-century author. Here the gulf between the modern world and the world of the New Testament is at its widest. Revelation strikes the modern reader as strange, but the cultural distance is not always appreciated. The book's symbolic imagery provides readers predisposed towards such things with endless opportunity for divining the future by various speculative means. This produces the illusion of a bridge across the gap. Hebrews' interest in sacrifices, sanctuaries, priesthoods and covenants does not so readily lend itself to re-appropriation by readers in the modern West. Here recognition of the temporal and cultural distance is inescapable. Few are patient enough to bridge the gulf at this widest point; it is easier to move on to Paul or the Gospels—or go divining in Revelation.

² I retain the Christian term *Old Testament* in preference to the ecumenical term *Hebrew Bible*. Among other reasons for doing so is the fact that any reference to the New Testament implies that there is an Old Testament to which it stands in relation and without which it cannot be properly understood—a point that any New Testament scholar should want to emphasize, regardless of faith commitments. In any case, whatever problems some see with the former term, the latter is a misnomer. The referent is comprised of texts written in Aramaic as well as Hebrew. It is even less accurate in the context of early Christianity since most early Christians read these texts in Greek translations that they considered authoritative (see Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon* [trans. Mark E. Biddle; Edinburgh and New York: T&T Clark, 2002]). It should be obvious that the scriptures of the Old Testament are "old" in the sense of *older*, not in the sense of replaced or obsolete.

Even though Hebrews is part of the New Testament, one might wonder if it should not be given over to Old Testament scholars for study.³ Consider some of the things with which Hebrews is concerned: the mediation of the Law by angels (2:2), the Abrahamic promise of the land and its fulfillment (4:8-11), ablutions (6:2; 9:10), purification rites involving the blood of bulls, goats and water mixed with the ashes of a red heifer (9:13, 19-22; 10:4), the death of Jesus as a purification offering (1:3; 9:13-14, 23; 10:22), the purification of the believer's body by "pure water" (10:22), the configuration and purification of the earthly sanctuary (9:2-5, 21), the heavenly sanctuary and its purification (8:2; 9:24), entrance into the most holy place (6:19; 9:24; 10:19-20), Jesus' ministry as that of a high priest (8:1-2; 10:21), contrasting orders of priesthood and contrasting qualifications for high priesthood (4:15-5:5; 7:3, 16, 20-21, 26-28; 8:1-2), the enigmatic Melchizedek (5:10; 6:20-7:17), the Day of Atonement ritual (9:7; 13:11) and possibly halakhic regulations concerning the consumption of sacrificial foods (13:9-10). Hebrews is a distinctly *alttestamentliche* New Testament book.

Nowhere else in the New Testament do we find such a high concentration or so broad a range of what are popularly considered arcane "Old Testament" concerns. The terminology and categories of Paul and other early Christian writers most familiar to people are largely absent. Hebrews employs those of the Pentateuch. Most of these are alien to the cultural and religious environments with which modern

³ There is precedent for this. In the days before biblical scholarship was rigidly divided and subdivided, Franz Delitzsch, best remembered as an Old Testament scholar, wrote an important two-volume commentary on Hebrews: *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2 vols; trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887). More recently Old Testament scholar Robert P. Gordon has written an insightful article and a refreshing little commentary on this epistle: "Better Promises: Two Passages in Hebrews Against the Background of the Old Testament Cultus," in *Templum Amicitiae* (ed. William Horbury; JSNTSup 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 434-49; idem, *Hebrews* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

readers are acquainted. The comparative paucity of similar "Old Testament" concerns expressed elsewhere in the New Testament makes this epistle look strangely out of place. The result is that many value Hebrews chiefly for what is perceived as a devotional aside on faith. The other twelve chapters are strangers and aliens in the New Testament rarely shown hospitality. As the undergraduate once observed in the opening line of his essay: "That strange old Epistle to the Hebrews; scarcely anyone reads it these days, save for the eleventh chapter."⁴

Why is Hebrews so concerned with "Old Testament" issues in a way that other NT books are not? How do these concerns relate to the situation of the recipients, if at all? Where do we situate this "*alttestamentliche*" epistle in the history of early Christianity? What implications can we draw from these concerns about the development of early Christian thought and practice? The answers one gives to such riddling questions, or whether one thinks they can be answered at all, depend on how one answers related questions regarding Hebrews' context and the situation it addresses.

Moule is representative when he observes with characteristic understatement that the interpretation of Hebrews "depends not a little" on the situation the author is taken to address.⁵ As long as that situation is unknown, the exegesis of numerous passages significant to the book's argument remains highly tentative. Furthermore, those features of Hebrews that differentiate it from the rest of the New Testament

⁴ Reported in Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 11.

⁵ C.F.D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (3rd ed.; London: A&C Black, 1981; repr. London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 68. For the sake of simplicity Hebrews will be referred to as being authored by one person. However, Daniel Wallace has suggested that the infrequent use of "I" and an unusual use of the first-person plural may suggest that Hebrews was written by at least two persons, with one being the better known to the audience. See further *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 396-97 n. 11.

either remain unexplained or they are forced into explanatory grids that do them little justice. In short, without a solid theory of the epistle's background we are unable adequately to understand the theology, social dynamics and place of Hebrews within earliest Christianity (and Second Temple Judaism more broadly). This is generally recognized and the result is that many scholars are hesitant to incorporate Hebrews significantly into studies of broader issues in the study of the New Testament and early Christianity. Hebrews does have its aficionados and other NT scholars must sometimes grapple with it. Nonetheless, uncertainty about Hebrews' background has led to it being "the Cinderella of New Testament scholarship."⁶

To complicate matters further, Hebrews has long been regarded as a literary riddle.⁷ Traditionally Hebrews was understood to be an epistle. This is reflected in the fact that the manuscripts and canon lists always place Hebrews at various places amongst the Pauline epistles or at the end of the Pauline corpus.⁸ But unlike the Pauline letters, Hebrews does not open by identifying the author and recipients. The author begins by simply jumping straight into his discourse. Yet, Hebrews clearly has an epistolary ending (13:22-25). Various literary classifications have been suggested and most scholars have come to classify it as a sermon or homily to which

⁶ J.C. McCullough uses this phrase when recalling the situation of 1980 in "Hebrews in Recent Scholarship," *IBS* 16 (1994): 66. McCullough used this description primarily because of the comparatively few works being published on Hebrews at that time. The number of publications focused on Hebrews has since increased. George H. Guthrie sees this as indication that "Cinderella seems to have come out of the obscurity and to be on her way to the ball" ("Hebrews in Its First-Century Contexts: Recent Research," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* [ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic and Leicester: Apollos, 2004], 414). However, the enlarged number of Hebrews specialists (which remains small compared with other areas of NT scholarship) and their publications has not led to significantly increased appreciation for the epistle within the broader discipline.

⁷ W. Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefs* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906); Richard Perdelwitz, "Das literarische Problem des Hebräerbriefs," *ZNW* 11 (1910): 59-78; 105-23.

⁸ For a survey of the relevant data, see William H.P. Hatch, "The Position of Hebrews in the Canon of the New Testament," *HTR* 29/2 (1936): 133-51 or Frumentius Renner, "An die Hebräer" — ein pseudepigraphischer Brief (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 1970), 42-91.

an epistolary ending has been attached. If this is correct, then Hebrews is not only unique in the New Testament in terms of content, but also in terms of genre. If it is not and Hebrews is properly classified as an epistle, it is unique for lacking a customary opening.⁹

The Riddle and Progress in Scholarship (or Lack Thereof)

Our epistle is widely perceived as strange and strangely out of place in the New Testament. As a result, many people assign Hebrews to what Pursiful refers to as "the non-working section" of the NT canon.¹⁰ The positions one takes on specific introductory questions regarding the epistle's destination, recipients, purpose, date and genre—or whether one thinks there is enough evidence to take positions on these issues—have particular bearing on how one understands Hebrews as a whole. Unfortunately, Hebrews is notorious for refusing to reveal the correct answers to such questions and scholarship has had little success uncovering them. This exacerbates the peculiarity of Hebrews and contributes further to its neglect among both lay persons and biblical scholars. In addition, many avenues of inquiry remain impassable, some of which have the potential of shedding important light on the development of early Christianity. Any possibility of making progress on one or more of these questions should be welcomed by all who have interest in the early Jesus movement.

⁹ Chapter Six will show that the arguments which lead scholars to classify Hebrews as a sermon do not withstand critical scrutiny. Though lacking an epistolary opening, the body of Hebrews contains epistolary features and it has an epistolary ending. For this reason Hebrews will be referred to as an epistle.

¹⁰ Darell J. Pursiful, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 1.

Hebrews' marginal position within NT studies is reinforced by the perception that investigation into core introductory issues is at an impasse that cannot be overcome. For two and a half centuries Hebrews has been the subject of critical investigation. Nevertheless, it is stereotypical to begin discussion of the book by referring to it as an enigma or as "the riddle of the New Testament." Though clichés, these are not trivial characterizations. Hebrews' author, destination, recipients, purpose, date, genre, structure, and conceptual background—nearly all the main issues of *neutestamentliche Einleitungswissenschaft*—remain open questions of inquiry.¹¹ We have a few answers to basic introductory questions for many NT books. For Hebrews we have only widely varying guesses. Some are more plausible than others and some among these incommensurable options are undoubtedly correct. But more than two centuries of critical scholarship has yet to produce solid confirmation for any one of them. General trends in recent scholarship highlight how little progress has been made on these issues and how little expectation there is for this to change.¹²

In 1994 J.C. McCullough observed that the previous fifteen years saw an increase of interest in Hebrews resulting in numerous publications.¹³ However, as Craig Koester observed at the same time, the previous two decades of Hebrews scholarship were marked by a steady evolution of discussion rather than any radically new departures.¹⁴ Little has changed in the decade since McCullough and

¹¹ The German *Einleitung* is being employed to refer to the genre of "New Testament introduction." This includes discussion of introductory issues at the beginning of academic commentaries and elsewhere in addition to formal works of New Testament introduction.

¹² What follows is intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive. The surveys by McCullough, Koester and Guthrie (cited above and below) remain accurate descriptions of the state of scholarship. In a few cases the following discussion will differ with their assessments, but in the main it is meant to supplement them and highlight specific trends in recent scholarship on the epistle.

¹³ "Hebrews in Recent Scholarship," 66.

¹⁴ Craig R. Koester, "The Epistle to the Hebrews in Recent Study," *CurBS* 2 (1994): 123.

Koester published their surveys. Most discussion continues to focus upon such issues as the author's intellectual tradition(s), his use of Old Testament texts, Hebrews' structure, Christology and other theological themes.¹⁵ Discussion of core introductory issues has become a rote exercise in which scholars merely rehearse the arguments that were bantered about a century ago. This is readily seen if one compares contemporary treatments of Hebrews' background with older surveys of scholarship and *Einleitungen*.¹⁶ Indeed, many older discussions could pass as new with but modest revision. All that would be required is updating the bibliography and the insertion of a paragraph describing the studies published in the wake of the Dead Sea discoveries that attempted to link Hebrews to the Qumran sectarians.¹⁷ Scholars continue to state their positions on core introductory issues, but it has become rare to see someone investigate them afresh with optimism about taking the discussion forward. Even scholars who employ new methodologies with the potential of advancing the discussion seem resigned merely to restate older formulations of the issues, indicate their preferences and work within those boxes.

¹⁵ Cf. Guthrie, "First-Century Contexts."

¹⁶ For older surveys of scholarship, see Erich Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," 138-236 (= *Aufbruch und Verheißung*, 1-99); F.F. Bruce, "Recent Contributions to the Understanding of Hebrews," *ExpTim* 80 (1969): 260-64; George Wesley Buchanan, "The Present State of Scholarship on Hebrews," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (4 vols; ed. J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 1:299-330; J.C. McCullough, "Some Recent Developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews," *IBS* 2 (1980): 141-65; idem, "Some Recent Developments in Research on the Epistle to the Hebrews II," *IBS* 3 (1981): 28-45; Helmut Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Erträge der Forschung; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985); Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Eldon Jay Epp and George MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 351-70. This is even more readily illustrated by consulting older *Einleitungen* such as found in Adolf Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Janet Penrose Ward; London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1904); Eduard Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (2nd and 3rd ed.; Leipzig and Erlangen: Deichertsche, 1922) and Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 Vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909).

¹⁷ Such refitting would be useful since the older works often contain fuller discussion of the core introductory issues than found in recent works. A notable exception is Donald Guthrie's massive *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

This stagnation on core issues of Hebrews' background does not mean there have been no advances in our understanding of broader introductory questions. For example, in a recent survey article George Guthrie documents a number of insights that have come to light during the last decade or so regarding Hebrews' use of the Old Testament.¹⁸ In his opinion this is the area where recent scholarship on Hebrews has made the greatest strides. However, it should be noted that more needs to be done comparing Hebrews' use of Old Testament traditions with other Second Temple Jewish texts (especially texts other than Philo). Most attention has been paid to the text forms behind Hebrews' quotations and comparison of exegetical technique. But comparison of the significance attached to particular biblical themes and how the biblical text was brought to bear upon common areas of concern has been neglected. More also needs to be done on how quotations and allusions function in the argument of the book, what Christopher Stanley has referred to as the "rhetorical analysis of quotations."¹⁹

We can also point to increased understanding of Hebrews' arrangement, structure and use of rhetorical devices. The author's rhetorical skill is considerable and sometimes the techniques he employs are sophisticated and subtle. It is increasingly recognized that the author composed his work with careful attention to how it would sound when read aloud. In George Guthrie's opinion, the author's use of rhetorical and stylistic conventions offers "resounding support" for classifying Hebrews as an example of early Christian preaching that has incorporated

¹⁸ George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research," *CBR* 1/2 (2003): 271-94.

¹⁹ Christopher Stanley, "The Rhetoric of Quotations: An Essay on Method," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig J. Evans and James A. Sanders; JSNTSup 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 44-58. The briefest start toward this is detectable in George H. Guthrie, "Old Testament in Hebrews," *DLNT*, 841-850.

sophisticated aspects of rhetorical argumentation.²⁰ Whether these features do in fact support specifying Hebrews' genre as a sermon is doubtful, but appreciation of these features has certainly contributed to this classification becoming the consensus view.²¹ However, neither increased insight into the author's rhetorical strategy nor the perceived solution of Hebrews' genre has led to agreement about a related perennial conundrum—how Hebrews should be structured. To the contrary, the more insight we have into the author's rhetorical strategy, the more difficult it becomes to construct an adequate outline for the epistle. His extensive use of foreshadowing, hook words, inclusio, parallelism, overlap and a variety of means of transition make it very difficult to demarcate distinct textual units.²² Many times one thinks the clear boundaries of a unit have been identified only to have this shattered by the realization that some element within those boundaries seems to be demarcating a different unit that extends beyond them.²³

New ground of a sort was broken with the publication of three monographs devoted to the social-scientific study of Hebrews.²⁴ Applying the tools of the social sciences is to be welcomed for at least two reasons. Any insight into the social

²⁰ Guthrie, "First-Century Contexts," 430.

²¹ On the basis of the same observations a few scholars prefer to classify Hebrews as an oration or treatise and a few still consider it a genuine epistle or letter.

²² Most of the relevant data is clearly documented in George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

²³ At the level of macrostructure, my study has lead me to divide the major units as follows: 1:1-4:13; 4:14-10:18; 10:19-13:21; 13:22-25. Independently Knut Backhaus (and probably others) has proposed the same outline, though I am hesitant to assign to the units the classical labels *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, *argumentatio*, *peroratio* and postscript as he does. See Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefts im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 50.

²⁴ David A. deSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 152; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Richard W. Johnson, *Going Outside the Camp: The Sociological Function of the Levitical Critique in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 209; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Iutisone Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews: The Construction and Maintenance of a Symbolic Universe* (JSNTSup 219; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). These were preceded by John Dunnill's less thorough-going use of social-scientific methodology in *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 71; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

situation of the recipients and cultural values at play in their relationship with the author will benefit our understanding of the letter and of the early Christian community to which it was sent. Furthermore, Hebrews provides an ideal test-case to see whether social-scientific methods can succeed in unlocking a riddle that has thus far eluded historical criticism. Unfortunately, while social-scientific approaches may hold potential for shedding important new light on the epistle, we must wait to see if they can deliver. The monographs by Richard Johnson and Iutisone Salevao are poorly done and do little to advance our understanding of the epistle. Salevao's failure is particularly noteworthy because his project is the most ambitious of these but succeeds only to illustrate the kinds of surprising mistakes scholars can make in interpreting this book.²⁵ David deSilva's work is the most academically sound of the three but is focused almost exclusively on the honor/shame dynamics of patron/client relationships. Appreciating the honor/shame dynamic is obviously useful for understanding aspects of the author's exhortations, but the entire culture operated on an honor/shame basis, so this does not do much to help us understand the distinctive situation the author addresses. Thus, it remains to be seen whether an informed use of social-scientific methodologies can take forward the discussion of Hebrews' background.

Progress can also be detected in various other areas of investigation. But, as already noted, they are generally marked by the slow evolution of ideas. Compared with other branches of NT studies, contemporary Hebrews scholarship is notable for its lack of creativity and fresh insight. At least two factors contribute to this. First, it

²⁵ A couple of these will be discussed in Chapter 4. Also see my review of this book in *JETS* 47/3 (2004): 545-47.

has become insulated from some important and fruitful trends in the study of early Christianity. For example, a harvest of important new insight into Second Temple Judaism has arisen from archeology, continued study of early Jewish and Christian Pseudepigrapha and, especially, the release of the full corpus of Qumran texts. Yet, one is hard-pressed to find instances of Hebrews specialists utilizing this insight in any significant manner.²⁶

Many Hebrews specialists seem to be under the illusion that the discussion of Hebrews in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls that took place in the 1950s-60s was misguided and that it served only to highlight the essentially "Hellenistic" character of the epistle. Palestinian Jewish sources are not completely neglected in the study of Hebrews, but their use is minimal and rarely takes account of recent scholarship on them. Philo continues to be utilized, but with greater awareness of the differences between Hebrews and the Alexandrian philosopher.²⁷ The emphasis of recent Hebrews scholarship, however, seeks to find insight by studying parallels with Greco-Roman literature. There is insight to be gained from this, but we should expect more to come from Jewish sources. It is simply misguided for Hebrews

²⁶ Marie Isaacs (*Sacred Space*) is the most sensitive of recent writers to Hebrews' Second Temple context. She does not, however, employ much recent scholarship on early Judaism. Her work also came out just as the release of all the Scrolls began to bear fruit.

²⁷ Ronald Williamson's *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ALGHJ 4; Leiden: Brill, 1970) did the most to undermine the earlier tendency to read Hebrews as if a connection between its author and Philo or his writings were all but proven. Though Williamson's study was more narrowly focused, scholars came to generally infer from this that Philo was not the place to look for the conceptual background of the author. The main dissent from this has been expressed in a series of articles by James W. Thompson collected as *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982). For an overview of the discussion and critique, see L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7-42 and Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 49-61. More recently, Kenneth L. Schenck has critically reexamined Williamson's work, accepting the corrective Williamson brought but concluding that in many instances he had overstated his case. Schenck feels that Philo remains the best source of history of religions material for the study of Hebrews and would not be surprised if the author of Hebrews had a general acquaintance with Philo's writings. See "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study after Thirty Years," *SPhilo* 14 (2002): 112-35. It remains to be seen whether there will be a revival of Philonically inspired studies of Hebrews.

specialists to pay so little attention to the advances that have been made in our understanding of Second Temple Judaism. Most of these advances pertain directly to Judaism in Palestine, but even if we could rule out a Palestinian location for the recipients (which we cannot), this does not render these advances irrelevant. To assume otherwise is to display a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Judaism and Christianity in the Western Diaspora of the first century. Arguably, one of the chief reasons why the study of other parts of the New Testament has outpaced that of Hebrews is that a greater proportion of scholars specializing in those areas have kept an eye on developments in the study of Second Temple Judaism, some contributing to them.

A second factor for the comparatively slow progress in Hebrews scholarship is the highly situational nature of the letter.²⁸ Our uncertainty about how to answer core introductory questions serves as an impediment for many areas of investigation. Rhetorical criticism provides an apt example. It is widely recognized that Hebrews is the most rhetorically sophisticated document in the New Testament. One would expect it to be a favorite subject of rhetorical-critical study. Analysis of the author's

²⁸ Contra Jon M. Isaak, *Situating the Letter to the Hebrews in Early Christian History* (SBEC 53; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2002). Isaak repeatedly asserts that Hebrews is a non-situational literary text. He insists we should approach Hebrews with the kinds of expectations that patristic scholars bring to the writings of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian rather than read it like the Pauline letters with expectations of being able to learn something about its occasion and background. Isaak's argument is deeply flawed on many fronts and often proceeds on the basis of disputable *a priori* assertions regarding questionable probabilities. Moreover, he nowhere offers exegesis of passages that strongly suggest the author has some knowledge of affairs in a particular community to which he is writing and that he tailored his address in accordance with what he knew (e.g., 3:1; 3:12; 5:11-12; 6:9-12; 10:19; 10:32-36; 12:4-5, 12, 25; 13:7; 13:18-19; 13:22-25). Contrary to Isaak's bald assertions (e.g., p. 85), there *are* significant differences between situational NT documents like Hebrews and the later patristic writings. These differences are evident to anyone who has spent time carefully studying both sets of texts. I say this based on first-hand experience working closely with the writings of two of the patristic writers Isaak mentions, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. For corroboration see Carl Mosser, "The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents and the Origin of Christian Deification," *JTS* 56/1 (2005): forthcoming.

rhetorical strategy is a growth area within Hebrews scholarship, but the number and breadth of rhetorical-critical studies focused on Hebrews is disproportionately small compared with the number focused on other NT documents.²⁹ As with most NT scholarship, rhetorical criticism is dominated by the study of the Gospels and Pauline corpus. Even some of the Catholic epistles receive significantly greater attention than Hebrews.³⁰ In the study of these other NT documents a wide variety of rhetorical features are examined. The rhetorical study of Hebrews, however, is dominated by the issue of the epistle's structure. Other features are analyzed, but not to the extent that we would expect if Hebrews really is the most rhetorically sophisticated document in the New Testament. We would expect rhetorical critics to have a field day with it but as things stand they seem to have found it less amenable to their method than other parts of the New Testament. Why is this so? The answer may be that fruitful rhetorical criticism depends upon the results of historical criticism more than its practitioners sometimes acknowledge.

Understanding the rhetorical strategies employed by an author is not simply a matter of cataloguing the rhetorical devices found in a document. Setting and audience were crucial factors that ancient authors and speakers considered when determining what kinds of rhetorical devices to deploy. Thus, rhetorical analysis must also relate the use of rhetorical devices to a text's purpose and assumed audience. This is particularly important for highly situational texts. Even if we only have well-developed theories rather than "assured results," the more we can

²⁹ Duane F. Watson surveys rhetorical-critical studies of Hebrews in "Rhetorical Criticism of Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles since 1978," *CurBS* 5 (1997): 181-87. Only a few rhetorical-critical studies focused on Hebrews have been published since this article (see Guthrie, "First-Century Contexts," 419-24). The number of rhetorical studies devoted to Hebrews appears disproportionately small when one considers its length and the claims made about its rhetorical sophistication.

³⁰ See Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism," 187-201.

justifiably say about the background of a text, the more fruitfully rhetorical criticism can be employed to study it. Hebrews may be the most rhetorically sophisticated document in the New Testament, but because it is also a highly situational document, the fruitful study of the author's rhetorical strategies is limited by our inability to answer basic questions about the situation the epistle addresses.

This uncertainty about almost every element of Hebrews' background makes it difficult for scholars to even agree upon a most general rhetorical classification. How they classify the epistle is largely the product of the kind of background they envision. Barnabas Lindars, for example, dates Hebrews prior to 70 C.E., believes the Temple is in view when the tabernacle is discussed and sees the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity as still somewhat porous.³¹ Reading Hebrews within these parameters leads him to see the argument of Hebrews as a carefully crafted piece of deliberative rhetoric.³² In direct disagreement with Lindars, Pamela Eisenbaum classifies Hebrews as epideictic rhetoric.³³ Her classification follows from dating the epistle after 70 C.E., considering the Temple cultus irrelevant to the author's concerns, and postulating a situation in which the author and readers have a Christian identity quite distinct from Judaism.³⁴ Marie Isaacs likewise opts for a post-70 date, but in her reconstruction readers are addressed for whom the Temple cultus is still a live issue. Because of the readers' sense of loss after the Temple's destruction, Hebrews was written to reinterpret Judaism's established means of access to God. She detects both deliberative and epideictic elements but does not assign the entire epistle to one or

³¹ Barnabas Lindars, "Hebrews and the Second Temple," in *Templum Amicitiae* (ed. Horbury), 410-33; idem, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-25.

³² "The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews," *NTS* 35 (1989): 382-406.

³³ Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (SBLDS 156; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 12, 135 n. 4.

³⁴ Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 7.

the other classification.³⁵ In light of these differences, it is no wonder that Hebrews has not been a favored subject for rhetorical criticism. Any progress in our understanding of the epistle's background would be a boon to the rhetorical study of Hebrews as well as to other areas of inquiry.

When we turn to the core issues of NT introduction, we see that almost no progress was made in the last century. In comparison with the state of the questions a century ago, the main detectable differences today are shifts in where opinion divides and the seriousness (or lack thereof) with which some positions are considered. For example, scholars remain divided about whether Hebrews was composed before or after the destruction of the Temple. Unlike the dating of other NT documents, the dispute about Hebrews' date does not break down according to ideological lines; "liberals" and "conservatives" are readily found in both camps. Those who opt for an early date continue to find Hebrews' failure to mention the destruction of the Temple decisive. As J.A.T. Robinson stated the point a generation ago, "Had this event occurred by the time that Hebrews was written, it would have dotted the i's and crossed the t's of everything its author was labouring to prove."³⁶ Those who opt for a late date continue to point to passages that they believe indicate a second generation Christian community. They insist that the consistent discussion of the tabernacle instead of the Temple renders silence about the Temple's destruction irrelevant. Stanley Porter has recently bolstered the plausibility of the latter view by arguing, on the basis of aspect theory, that the present tense

³⁵ Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 67, 186-88.

³⁶ John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976), 204. It is surely with Hebrews that Robinson's arguments were at their strongest. It is unfortunate that they are overshadowed by the strained positions he took on some of the other NT documents.

descriptions of the cultus do not necessarily imply current cultic activity. He does not argue for a late date, but he seeks to show that these present-tense descriptions do not, by themselves, support an early date.³⁷ Aware of Porter's argument, some continue to maintain that there are places where a timeless understanding of the cult's description would "sound odd and ill-judged rhetorically" if a post-70 C.E. date is insisted upon.³⁸ A spate of recent articles has given fresh and often convincing support for an early date based largely on the eschatology of the epistle.³⁹ Moreover, scholars who prefer a late date now often acknowledge that any date between 60 and 90 C.E. is plausible.

Another example is the ethnic and religious background of the recipients. The predominant view has always been that Hebrews was written to Christians of Jewish background. But in the first half of the twentieth century scholars seriously debated whether Hebrews might not have been written to an entirely Gentile congregation. Today only a few scholars find this idea plausible enough to warrant serious consideration.⁴⁰ In the wake of the Dead Sea discoveries Hans Kosmala

³⁷ Stanley E. Porter, "The Date of the Composition of Hebrews and Use of the Present Tense-Form," in *Crossing the Boundaries* (ed. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce and David E. Orton; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 295-313. If one is not fully persuaded by Porter's long-standing arguments regarding tense and aspect of Greek verbs (cf. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* [New York: Lang, 1989]), then neither will this argument be persuasive. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that (1) Porter is concerned with a particular way that scholars have argued for an early date, not to argue against an early date and (2) even if he is right about verbal aspect and its implication for present tense verbs in Hebrews, it is still possible that Hebrews describes the activities of the cultus as contemporaneous, this just cannot be established on the basis of verb tense alone.

³⁸ Gordon, *Hebrews*, 31. Gordon, concurring with much that Porter says, discusses two passages (8:4 and 10:2) that he feels make best sense rhetorically on a pre-70 date (pp. 31-32).

³⁹ Especially see Lindars, "Hebrews and the Second Temple;" Peter Walker, "Jerusalem in Hebrews 13:9-14 and the Dating of the Epistle," *TynBul* 45/1 (1994): 39-71; idem, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 201-34; Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11," *BibSac* 157 (2000): 281-303; idem, "The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4-8," *BibSac* 155 (1998): 62-91; idem, "The Eschatology of the Warning in Hebrews 10:26-31," *TynBul* 53/1 (2002): 97-20; idem, "Angels and the Eschatology of Heb 1-2," *NTS* 49 (2003): 90-107.

⁴⁰ This is less applicable to German scholarship wherein the idea has always received wider currency.

argued that the recipients were not Christians at all, but Essenes whom the author hoped to convert.⁴¹ This idea received almost no endorsement and led to the marginalization of Kosmala's work. Recently, however, J.C. O'Neill has taken up Kosmala's ideas and gone a step further in a series of curious articles.⁴² Except for the epistolary ending, O'Neill believes Hebrews was originally a collection of oracles about the Teacher of Righteousness composed in the first-century B.C.E.. He maintains *per impossible* that every occurrence of Ἰησοῦς is an interpolation, except at 4:8 where Joshua is mentioned. On this view both the author and readers are, necessarily, non-Christian Jews. O'Neill's arguments are extremely problematic at many points and it is unlikely that any reputable scholar will follow his lead. Except for the occasional proponent for a Gentile audience, scholarly opinion is divided between those who believe the audience was a mixed community with a significant number of Gentiles and those who believe it was predominantly comprised of hellenistic Jewish Christians. The latter is the majority view.

Related to the question of the recipient's background is the purpose of the epistle. Some scholars maintain that the danger facing the recipients was merely spiritual malaise, a view first developed by advocates of an entirely Gentile audience. Most rightly disregard this as insufficient to account for the pathos of the epistle's exhortations and warnings. Something more serious and pressing seems to be in view. The readers were not merely lax in their commitment, but tempted to give up

⁴¹ Hans Kosmala, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen: Studien zur Vergeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (StPB 1; Leiden: Brill, 1959).

⁴² J.C. O'Neill, "Jesus in Hebrews," *JHC* 6/1 (1999): 64-82; idem, "The Death of the Teacher of Righteousness in Hebrews 13:12-13," *JHC* 7/2 (2000): 286-88; idem, "Who Killed Whom (4Q285) Without the Camp (Heb 13:12-13)?" *JHC* 9/1 (2002): 125-39. Also see some subtle supporting arguments in his "'Who is comparable to me in my glory?' 4Q491 fragment 11 (4Q491C) and the New Testament," *NovT* 42/1 (2000): 24-38.

their Christian confession entirely. The majority of scholars continue to identify the cause of this temptation as Judaism. The recipients who had converted from Judaism were for some reason tempted to return to their old faith. Any Gentiles in the community were attracted to Judaism or possibly to a Judaizing teaching like that addressed in Galatians. (More will be said about the assumptions underlying these explanations in the next chapter.)

For most of the history of scholarship the authorship of Hebrews has been the most intensely discussed introductory question. The quest to identify the author has often eclipsed other questions and shaped the answers given to them. When the authorship question dominated, investigation into the author's background, the recipients' location and the situation the epistle addresses were little more than attempts to make possible and support a scholar's favorite candidate. Sporadic efforts to identify the author with a named New Testament personality continue. David L. Allen has argued for Luke,⁴³ Ruth Hoppin has revived Harnack's argument for Priscilla,⁴⁴ and David Allen Black and Eta Linnemann have even tried to resuscitate the case for Paul.⁴⁵ A few popular-level commentators continue to assume

⁴³ David L. Allen, "The Lukan Authorship of Hebrews: A Proposal," *JOTT* 8 (1996): 1-22. Allen's essay is a précis of his dissertation, "An Argument for the Lukan authorship of Hebrews," (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Arlington, 1987).

⁴⁴ Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fort Bragg, Calif.: Lost Coast Press, 2000). An earlier version of this book was recalled shortly after publication. Hoppin is convinced there was a conspiracy against her book because it advocates a female author. However, Hoppin's book is so poorly researched, so poorly argued and contains so many errors of fact that the more likely scenario is that the publisher was simply embarrassed by it. Harnack's original presentation is a far more responsible argument for this position: Adolph von Harnack, "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes," *ZNW* 1 (1900): 16-41.

⁴⁵ David Alan Black, "On the Pauline Authorship of Hebrews (Part 1): Overlooked Affinities between Hebrews and Paul," *Faith & Mission* 16/2 (1999): 32-51 and idem, "On the Pauline Authorship of Hebrews (Part 2): The External Evidence Reconsidered," *Faith & Mission* 16/3 (1999): 78-86. As one would expect from Black, the main thrust of his argument focuses on linguistic and stylistic similarities between Paul and Hebrews. However, almost all of these similarities are readily explained by the religious and linguistic milieu common to Paul and Hebrews. Black's case is further weakened if one grants that the author of Hebrews was either part of the Pauline circle (cf. 13:23) or had read some of Paul's writings

Pauline authorship.⁴⁶ But for a generation now most scholars and an increasing number of other readers have been content to accept the epistle's anonymity as intractable apart from new discoveries. It is also being accepted that the author may not be one of the named persons in the New Testament but instead, as Moffatt described him, "one of those personalities in whom the primitive church was more rich than we sometimes realize."⁴⁷ Scholars now attempt to construct a partial profile of the author based on clues in his epistle. The quest to identify the author had such a distorting effect on the investigation of other background questions that its demise is to be welcome. This opens the way to reinvestigating other core introductory issues in their own right with the possibility of new insight.

The one area in which scholarly opinion has most changed in the last century is the issue of Hebrews' destination. Here a significant number of specialists believe a probable solution has been found. Hebrews' destination will occupy a large portion of this thesis, so here a few observations will suffice. Until the last decades of the nineteenth century there was broad agreement regarding the probable answer to this question: Hebrews was written to Jerusalem or elsewhere in Jewish Palestine. In the opinion of many critical scholars it was obvious that the only way to make sense of Hebrews' argument was to see it as intended for an audience located in Palestine

(see further Ben Witherington, "The Influence of Galatians on Hebrews," *NTS* 37 [1991]: 146-52 and Knut Backhaus, "Der Hebräerbrief und die Paulus-Schule," *BZ* 37/2 [1993]: 183-208). Eta Linnemann, Bultmann's protégé-turned-fundamentalist, has tried to revive the position largely on church-tradition grounds in a three-part essay: "Wiederaufnahme-Prozess in Sachen des Hebräerbriefes: 1. Teil," *Fundamentum* 21/3 (2000): 102-112; "Wiederaufnahme-Prozess in Sachen des Hebräerbriefes: 2. Teil," *Fundamentum* 21/4 (2000): 52-65; "Wiederaufnahme-Prozess in Sachen des Hebräerbriefes: 3. Teil/Schluss," *Fundamentum* 22/1 (2001): 88-110. Rainer Riesner replies to Linnemann in "Der Hebräer-Brief nach Altkirchlichen Zeugnissen," *EuroJTh* 11/1 (2002): 15-29.

⁴⁶ Most recently, Dmitri Royster, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), xxi.

who had practical concerns centered on the levitical cultus. But by the early decades of the twentieth century that consensus was shattered and the majority of critical scholars felt that Palestine was the one location that could be ruled out with certainty. Numerous alternatives were entertained, but a Roman destination quickly attracted the support of numerous influential scholars. The former consensus experienced a revival after the Qumran finds. However, the speculative connections postulated between the author and/or recipients and Qumran proved unconvincing and the revival was short-lived. Today we can properly speak of there again being broad consensus regarding Hebrews' destination: it was written to Rome.

Adherents to this view differ in the certainty they attach to the hypothesis. Some see it as merely more probable than not while others believe it can safely be employed as a working hypothesis. A few even speak of certainty. Corresponding to this, some scholars do very little with this conclusion while others use it as the cornerstone upon which to reconstruct the entire situation of the epistle. One of these reconstructions has been so influential that it has even contributed to Hebrews being used as a primary datum for the history of Christianity in Rome.⁴⁸ There is occasional dissent, but those who demur from the consensus are almost always agnostic about the destination altogether.⁴⁹ The one thing about which nearly all specialists are

⁴⁸ Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 139-58; William L. Lane, "Roman Christianity during the Formative Years from Nero to Nerva," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 196-244; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (trans. Michael Steinhauser; Philadelphia: Fortress, 2003), 76-78, 80 n. 1; cf. B.M. Rapske, "Rome and Roman Christianity," *DLNTD*, 1063-68. In Lampe's favor, it should be noted that he acknowledges that the Roman hypothesis is far from certain and uses it very cautiously.

⁴⁹ E.g., David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews & James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth and Helwys, 2002).

confident is that Hebrews could not have been written to anywhere in Jewish Palestine.

The attractiveness of the Roman hypothesis stems from three things. First, it builds upon the one geographical place name mentioned in the epistle, Italy (13:22). Second, it has been successfully divorced from the quest for an author. For most of the history of interpretation reconstructions of Hebrews' background centered on favored candidates for authorship and were highly speculative. The Roman hypothesis is refreshingly sober and plausible in contrast. The great critical commentators of the nineteenth century who affirmed a Palestinian destination were also able to disassociate their position from specific authorship proposals. However, they continued to spend more energy investigating the epistle's authorship than they did other aspects of its background.⁵⁰ Second, proponents of the Roman hypothesis did not leave their proposal vague. Rather than simply give arguments in favor of locating the recipients in Rome, they eventually sought to situate Hebrews within the known history and social conditions of Roman Christianity. William Manson's 1949 Baird Lectures were particularly significant in this respect.⁵¹ No significant new evidence was offered in favor of a Roman destination, but there was a greater effort to connect Hebrews with the history of Roman Christianity. In the opinion of one influential commentator, Manson succeeded in providing Hebrews "with a more convincing life-setting than anyone else has done."⁵² In subsequent chapters we will see that this reconstruction and others predicated on a Roman destination suffer from

⁵⁰ It should be remembered that Pauline authorship was still widely disputed as a viable position.

⁵¹ William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder and Stoughton and Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury, 1951).

⁵² F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), xii.

debilitating weaknesses. But the achievement the hypothesis represents should not go unappreciated. Proponents of Palestinian and other destinations were content to argue for a destination and vague situation; proponents of a Roman destination attempted to flesh-out a textured "life-setting" for the epistle.⁵³ Doing this marked a significant advance in the study of Hebrews.

Despite the fact that the evidence and arguments have not changed much in more than a century, individual positions on five aspects of Hebrews' background have attracted the approval of a clear majority of specialists. The relative infrequency of dissent and the amount of certainty attached to these positions suggests listing them in descending order as follows: (1) Paul did not write Hebrews; (2) Hebrews could not have been written to a community in Palestine;⁵⁴ (3) Hebrews is a sermon or homily with an epistolary ending; (4) the recipients were a community of either Jewish Christians or a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians; (5) the recipients were most likely a congregation located in Rome. Some might prefer to order the middle positions differently, but it is unlikely that anyone will dispute the fact that each of these positions represents a consensus or near consensus of Hebrews scholarship. In the current climate scholarly dissention on Pauline authorship is almost non-existent, and those who dissent are not given much serious consideration.⁵⁵ Dissention on the other points can be tolerated, but it is infrequent.

⁵³ There are actually two kinds of proposals associated with a Roman destination. The most popular, invigorated by Manson, situates Hebrews in the time of Nero. The other opts for a later date in the reign of Domitian.

⁵⁴ The more modest position is simply that Hebrews was not written to Palestine, not that it *could not* have been. But many clearly believe the latter to be the case.

⁵⁵ This is an observation, not a prescription. While I believe the effort to rehabilitate Pauline authorship is problematic and doomed to failure, no one should be dismissed as unscholarly or uninformed just for attempting it. Black is correct when he observes that "a good deal of modern thinking [on the issue] appears to be due more to the prevailing climate of opinion than to any new evidence" ("Pauline

Moreover, when scholars dissent from one of these positions, they rarely offer substantive critique of the dominant view.

Outside the sub-discipline of Hebrews studies, many NT scholars remain unsure about what to make of the epistle. Thus, while some specialists are increasingly confident about Hebrews' background in Roman Christianity, this has not changed the epistle's status as the Cinderella of NT scholarship. One reason that non-specialists remain unsure about Hebrews is that they are not always aware of how widely the Roman hypothesis has been endorsed. Also, some do not rate the strength of the evidence in favor of the Roman hypothesis as highly as do some specialists, even when they consider it probable. This suggests that the increased confidence specialists have in the hypothesis may be the product of the sociology of scholarship, not greater appreciation of the strength of the case in favor of Rome. In any case, for the majority of NT scholars Hebrews remains a riddle and they are hesitant to utilize it. This can readily be illustrated by consulting the indices of ancient sources in any handful of books dealing with such issues as Christian origins, the development of early Christian thought and devotion, the Jewish "background" of the NT or the social world of early Christian communities. If Hebrews is mentioned at all, it is usually cited to illustrate points in the course of discussing other NT texts and themes or relegated to brief excurses. However, this could change as non-

Authorship," 84). He is also correct in observing that William Leonard's massive defense of Pauline authorship (*Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews: critical problem and use of the Old Testament* [Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1939]) "has not so much been refuted as bypassed" (p. 84). At the same time we must also observe that no new evidence has been brought forward in favor of Pauline authorship. Black's positive argument remains focused on lexicographical, linguistic and stylistic similarities between Hebrews and the Pauline letters. If one simply does not estimate these similarities strong enough to demand a single author (not to speak of dissimilarities), then there really isn't any kind of rebuttal to be offered. It turns out that the arguments of Leonard and Black can also be objected to on methodological grounds which cannot detain us here. Nonetheless, these arguments display notable scholarly ability.

specialists become more aware of the emergent consensus among Hebrews specialists. This will be to the detriment of our understanding of early Christianity (especially in Rome) if the Roman hypothesis proves unsound.

Why Has the Riddle Proven Intractable?

The last century of scholarship has seen no breakthroughs on any of the core issues of Hebrews background, just the migration of scholarly opinion. If one compares the discussion of these issues in recent works with *Einleitungen* from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one is struck by how similar the discussions are. These discussions usually rehearse the exact same reasons for and against various positions. Previous generations of scholars seem to have been somewhat optimistic about the prospects of eventually unraveling at least some of the riddles Hebrews presents us. Contemporary writers state their preferences, but it is rare to see a scholar consider any of the core introductory issues in a fresh way or attempt to bring new evidence to bear upon them.

Why has investigation of Hebrews' background stagnated? The reason that is likely to come to the mind of most people is lack of evidence. We simply do not have enough evidence to carry the investigation into new territory. Scholars in previous generations identified the key issues, amassed the relevant evidence and formulated the arguments about as well as can be done. A kind of skepticism has settled in about the prospects of investigating these issues anew apart from the discovery of startling new evidence. While more evidence would certainly be welcome, I am

convinced that the primary reason that investigation on Hebrews' background has stagnated is not evidentiary. Rather, it is conceptual.

It was observed above that a clear majority opinion has formed among Hebrews specialists in favor of five specific positions related to introductory issues. However, except for the denial of Pauline authorship, in each case the majority opinion is open to serious criticism. Subsequent chapters will discuss the arguments that are thought to rule out a Palestinian destination and those cited in favor of a Roman destination. It will be demonstrated that Hebrews was written to a group within the Jerusalem church whose members were experiencing strong tension, for the first time, between their identity as Jews and their identity as Christ-followers. But the next chapter will examine the assumptions that lie behind the fourth majority position, the ethnic/religious background of the recipients, for it is here that we find the conceptual flaw that inhibits the investigation of Hebrews' background. Stated most simply, the investigation of Hebrews' background has faltered because the epistle is read as a document of early Christianity. It should instead be read as a document of Second Temple Judaism. Once this is done the way is open to making the riddle tractable.

Chapter Two

Parting Ways, Early 'Christianity' and the Judaism of Hebrews

Introduction

Scholars are generally agreed that Hebrews was written to a community comprised of Jewish Christians or a mixed community comprised of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The minority view is that the recipients were entirely a Gentile Christian community. Whichever view is taken, it is presupposed that the author and readers were Christians. To say that they were Christians is almost always understood to mean that they were converts to Christianity and that their religion was no longer Judaism or some variety of paganism. Except for fringe views like Kosmala's and O'Neill's, the Christian identity of the recipients has never been questioned. The discussion has always focused on whether the recipients were people of Jewish or Gentile ethnic background whose religion was Christianity. In turn the author of Hebrews is very often understood to be "writing to demonstrate to [his readers] that Christianity is superior to Judaism."¹ But are these safe assumptions to make?

To most people nothing about this appears the least bit problematic. *Of course* the author and readers were Christians. *Of course* their religion was Christianity. *Of course* their ethnic background, whether Jewish or Gentile, is secondary to their

¹ Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 354.

religious identity as Christians. All of this is self-evident. And herein lies the problem.

These things *seem* self-evident to us because we live in a world in which Christianity and Judaism exist as mutually exclusive religions. They have existed as such for centuries. We tend to assume that they have always existed as such, or at least nearly always. Let us grant for the moment that we can speak of Judaism and Christianity in the first century, at least in some qualified sense. What were they? Is it accurate to say they were *religions*? What was the relationship between them? How did the earliest Christians think of their "Christianity"? The answers to these questions are extremely important for the interpretation of the New Testament because they function as a hermeneutical grid through which the New Testament is read. If an investigation proceeds on the basis of grossly anachronistic answers to these questions, this will have a distorting affect on how we interpret the New Testament. It is my contention that the investigation of Hebrews has been plagued by the tendency to assume for the author and recipients a kind of Christian identity that is out of place in the first century. This assumption is in turn derived from an anachronistic understanding of the nature of the Christ-movement's relationship to Judaism during this period. This conceptual flaw has led to misinterpretations of key passages useful in reconstructing the situation Hebrews addresses.

In what follows I will give a simplified discussion of the nature of Christianity in the first century, its relationship to Judaism and the impact this should have on the interpretation of the New Testament. Part of the discussion will employ traditional categories like *Jew*, *Judaism*, *Christian*, and *Christianity*. But these categories may themselves foster a latent anachronism. But they will be utilized to make some key

points because I do not want my argument to be viewed as dependent upon what some might consider an unproven nomenclature. After some of these points have been made, I will discuss the adequacy of speaking about Judaism and Christianity in the first century. This will be followed by an illustration of how mistaken assumptions about the nature of early Christianity are read into key passages focused on Hebrews 13:13, long recognized as the climactic exhortation of the epistle. The final part of this chapter will consider further how Hebrews should be viewed with respect to the parting of the ways.

First-Century Judaism and Christianity: Two Models

There are two basic models of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity through which most scholars have interpreted the relevant literary, epigraphic and archeological remains of the early centuries of the common era. These are not the only models possible and others have been suggested.² But a brief overview of these models is sufficient to highlight the particular anachronism that pervades most scholarship on Hebrews. We will term "the classic model" that set of assumptions which nearly all scholars uncritically brought to the interpretive task until the last few decades. The newer and currently dominant model based on the

² Daniel Boyarin's "wave-theory" account of Jewish-Christian history is particularly noteworthy. Rather than a family tree model that permits only divergence, Boyarin offers a proposal in which "innovations disseminate and interact like waves caused by stones thrown in a pond, an account in which convergence was as possible as divergence" ("Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/Christianity,'" in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* [ed. A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed; TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 74). He also likens his account to theories that some historical linguists have proposed that do not presuppose that related dialects necessarily derive from a unified proto-language, but instead imagines the distinct speech of peoples in geographically contiguous areas becoming more like each other than previously, thus producing dialects (pp. 76-77). An earlier description of this model is found in Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Judaism and Christianity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 8-11.

metaphor of parting ways will be referred to as the parting of the ways or PTW model.

The classic model considers first-century Judaism to be fairly homogeneous, or at least comprised of a large "normative Judaism" from which "heretical" sects diverged. This "normative Judaism" is considered to have naturally developed into Rabbinic Judaism after 70 C.E.. Christianity, however, was born as a new religion. From the perspective of adherents, Christianity replaced Judaism as the heir of the faith of biblical Israel. From the Jewish perspective, Christianity began as a Jewish sect that developed into a Gentile religion. There may have been a period attending the birth of Christianity when it was still within Judaism and the incompatibility of the two religions was not immediately evident, at least to insiders. But this "birthing period" is assumed to have been short-lived. The new religion quickly grew out of the old and left it behind while the old continued. From the Christian perspective, the old religion continued as something of a living artifact. From the Jewish perspective, it continued as what it had always been, the biblical faith of Israel.

Some scholars still utilize this framework in their interrogation of the evidence. Most, however, have come to adopt the "parting of the ways" model.³ The

³ For the background of this model, see Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions," in *Ways that Never Parted* (ed. Becker and Reed), 1-16. Examples of its use include: Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why," *ST 47* (1993): 135-51; James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991); idem, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Craig A. Evans, "Root Causes of the Jewish-Christian Rift from Jesus to Justin," in *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (JSNTSup 192; ed. Stanley E. Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 20-35; idem, "Christianity and Judaism: Partings of the Ways," *DLNTD*, 159-70; Wayne A. Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest F. Frerichs; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 93-115; Stanley E. Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson, "Ancient Understandings of the Christian-Jewish Split," in *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 36-51.

PTW model begins with acknowledgement of the diversity within Second Temple Judaism and denies that there was a pre-70 "normative Judaism" which was the precursor to Rabbinic Judaism. In an attempt to be theologically neutral and ecumenically sensitive, the earliest Christian movement and the precursors to Rabbinic Judaism in the pre-70 period are treated as two among many varieties of Judaism, or even as two Judaisms out of many Judaisms. The failure of the Jewish revolt against Rome was a catastrophe that eventually brought most Jewish movements to an end. But out of the ash heap two survivors emerged who went on to become the religions of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. The parting of the ways is ostensibly the story of how and when the separation between these movements became irreversible.

The PTW model describes early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism as being born and nurtured in the same Second Temple Jewish environment. In this light one would expect both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism to be understood as forms of Judaism (or Judaisms) that independently developed their common Second Temple inheritance.⁴ That is not, in fact, a position held by many scholars who employ the model.⁵ Rather, carrying over elements of the classic model, they see the Christian movement as developing into something non-Jewish. Christianity began as a Jewish movement, but at some point it ceased to be such. Rabbinic Judaism, however, retained greater continuity with its Second Temple heritage and continued to be Jewish. It is therefore thought of as a new stage in the inner evolution of Judaism

⁴ See Martin Goodman's diagram of the "standard view" of the parting of the ways in "Modeling the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in *Ways that Never Parted* (ed. Becker and Reed), 121.

⁵ For a notable exception, see Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

while Christianity represents the formation of a new genus (i.e. religion).⁶ Thus, as it is usually employed, the PTW model does not seek to explain how two forms of Judaism came to be differentiated from one another and how each developed its common heritage in distinct ways. It seeks, instead, to answer the questions: "When and how did Christianity *cease to be* a Judaism? When and how did this former Jewish movement *part from* Judaism?"⁷ This is particularly clear in James Dunn's influential book, *The Partings of the Ways*. Dunn posits four theological "pillars" of Second Temple Judaism that almost all who identified as Jews would have agreed with. He then seeks to illustrate that the major strand of Judaism that was to become Christianity modified these pillars to such an extent that it pulled apart from the rest of Judaism. It became a different religion with an "enduring Jewish character."⁸ Rabbinic Judaism is also the development of a major strand of Second Temple Judaism but it remains a form of Judaism.

While the parting of the ways was a process, scholars often want to identify some decisive event that made Christianity's separation from Judaism irreversible. The most popular suggestions are the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the Rabbinic exclusion of Christians from the synagogues later in the century and the approval of a "blessing" of heretics in the synagogue liturgy,⁹ or Bar Kochba's persecution of

⁶ Boccaccini portrays this (termed "the present approach") and the classic model (termed "the polemical approach") with helpful diagrams in *Middle Judaism*, 19. Boccaccini's diagram more accurately portrays how the PTW model is applied in practice than Goodman's diagram of the "standard view." Goodman's diagram of the standard view is similar to Boccaccini's diagram for his own approach (*Middle Judaism*, 20).

⁷ Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 16.

⁸ Dunn, *Partings*, 258.

⁹ There is a large body of literature on both these points, but for the purposes of this discussion it will suffice to note in passing that David Instone-Brewer has recently challenged the idea that the curse of the *minim* (heretics) was an early rabbinic innovation designed primarily to exclude Christians from the synagogue. He argues that it may have had an earlier origin as a condemnation of the Sadducean priesthood. See "The Eighteen Benedictions and the *Minim* before 70 C.E.," *JTS* 54/1 (2003): 25-44.

Jewish Christians during the second Jewish revolt (131/2- 135 C.E.). Whichever view is taken, all acknowledge that the parting of ways was a process that was underway long before any of the events proposed as decisive.

The PTW model has been subject to criticism and recently some scholars have begun questioning whether it is adequate to carry the explanatory load that has been assigned to it.¹⁰ My own criticisms focus not so much on the model itself, though I think it needs adjustment, but on how it is applied by those who use it. Discussion of the model's deficiencies and how it might be adjusted would be interesting, but only two criticisms will be mentioned here. First, some who employ the model seem to be more concerned with its contemporary ecumenical payoff than with incorporating the self-understanding of early Christians and Jews into the model.¹¹ Second, it seems to me that most who invoke the parting of ways metaphor in their descriptions of early Judaism and Christianity fail to take seriously enough the idea that the early Christ-movement was a Jewish movement.

This last point is especially crucial for the purposes of this study. Fundamental to the PTW model is the idea that the Christ-movement began as a Jewish sect. Presumably, then, the earliest documentary remains of the movement should be interpreted as documents of Second Temple Judaism. But that is not how

Instone-Brewer thinks it likely that the Eighteen Benedictions were also promulgated at Jabneh and does not deny that they came to be later applied to all Jewish heretics, especially Christians. On the application of the curse to Christians specifically, see the thorough discussion in William Horbury, *Jews and Christians: In Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 67-110.

¹⁰ Especially see Becker and Reed, "Introduction," 16-24. Some of their criticisms are overstated, some disputable but others deserve consideration. They do acknowledge, however, that there "is no doubt that the metaphor of 'parting ways' still proves helpful when dealing with certain aspects of the relationship between Jews and Christians in the first centuries of the Common Era" (18).

¹¹ See further Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct of Historical Reality?" *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101-119. I don't agree with all of her criticisms of the model, but she raises some important points, particularly about the theological ecumenism that sometimes drives it and how this leads to oversimplification.

interpreters who employ the model usually approach the New Testament. The reason for this is that scholars seek to find the germinated seeds of partition in the words and actions of either Jesus or Paul. The continuing connection between Judaism and Christianity is assigned to Jewish Christianity, a phenomenon that is usually considered to be outside the mainstream of the Christian movement by the end of the first century (a dubious supposition). With the possible exceptions of Matthew and John, contemporary scholars only rarely relate any of the NT documents to a Jewish Christianity in which the process of partition is still underway. Rather, the writings of the New Testament are typically treated as products of those strands of Christianity that were quickly departing from Judaism at an early stage (another dubious supposition). Even if Christianity as a whole was not completely separated from Judaism, the process is presumed to be near completion in the communities for which most of the NT documents were produced. Thus, they are interpreted not as Jewish texts, but as Christian texts—their Christian character being understood to entail "non-Jewish." Even the earliest traditions and texts in the New Testament are examined to illustrate how Christianity was departing from Judaism from the beginning. The upshot of this is that in most cases the PTW model ends up yielding results very similar to those reached by means of the older model that saw Christianity as a new religion right from the start. It cannot do otherwise since the entire New Testament is read in a basically "post-parting-of-the-ways way."

The old model saw Christianity to be a religion that is the offspring of another religion, Judaism. The relationship between the two is that of parent and estranged offspring. Chilton and Neusner observe that the premise at work in older "accounts of Judaism in the setting of the New Testament rests upon the judgement that

Judaism was one religion, Christianity another, different religion, taking shape out of, but against the grain of, the prior and continuing religion."¹² A very similar premise is at work in most applications of the PTW model. These premises, however, are incompatible with the unquestioned given of the NT documents themselves. The writers of the New Testament did not understand their "Christianity" as anything other than the natural and foreordained fulfillment of the faith of Israel. If the faith of Israel in the first-century is Judaism, then the New Testament writers see their faith as the truest, purest form of Judaism. Or, in the words of Chilton and Neusner, the "Christianity" of the New Testament writers "did not understand itself as anything other than the natural continuation of the Judaism represented by the Hebrew Scriptures of ancient Israel."¹³ For this reason they prefer to speak of "the Judaism of the New Testament" rather than of its Christianity.

Scholars who employ the PTW model continue to spill much ink on the "Jewish background" of the New Testament and early Christianity. But the appropriateness of this really must be questioned. It presupposes from the beginning that the New Testament and early Christianity are something other than Jewish. Everything Jewish is taken as part of their "background," but not what they are; what they are is *Christian* from the start. But if we take seriously the self-understanding of the earliest Christ-followers and what they believed their distinctive confession to be, then this must be deemed a mistake. The earliest Christ-followers were Jews who believed that the traditional hopes of Israel were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth and his resurrection from the dead. Since that is the case, then rather than look for the

¹² Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xviii.

¹³ *Judaism in the NT*, xviii.

"Jewish background" of the earliest Christ-movement and its leaders, it is appropriate only to consider them *as* Jewish. Rather than investigate a "background" that has been left behind, we must look at the Jewish context in which they remained. Not to do so is as absurd as talking about the background influence that Judaism exerted upon Hillel, Gamaliel, Josephus or Judah the Patriarch.¹⁴ Early leaders of the Christ-movement like Peter, James, Paul and the author of Hebrews understood themselves to be faithful to the inheritance of Israel no less than these other early Jews did. They simply would not have thought that their confession of Christ equaled conversion to a religion other than the one into which they were born.¹⁵ In other words, they were Jews, and though they came to be called "Christians," they never thought of their religion as Christianity.

We should not see early Christianity as a religion that broke away from early Judaism. Rather, early Christianity is something within early Judaism. Boccaccini likens Judaism to a genus and Christianity to a species. There were, of course, many species within the genus during the Second Temple period. But New Testament scholars and scholars of early Judaism both habitually separate early Christianity from all other Jewish groups. They then go on to discuss the relationship of early Christianity with early Judaism. According to Boccaccini, separating Christianity

¹⁴ Cf. Chilton and Neusner, *Judaism in the NT*, xvii.

¹⁵ Gentile converts to the Christ-movement would have experienced conversion to a new religion—or more precisely, to *a* religion. The pagan cults were not religions, but Judaism was different from the pagan cults (see further below). From our perspective, the religion they converted to was a form of Judaism. John Barclay has even described the early Christians as presenting a "multi-ethnic version of Judaism" ("The Jews of the Diaspora," in *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context* [ed. John Barclay and John Sweet; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 36). However, it is unlikely that the converts would have considered themselves Jews unless they had also been circumcised (for men) or were otherwise Torah observant. The fact that the early Christ-movement is both within and without ethnic Israel is the one phenomenon that most bedevils attempts to explicate its relationship to non-Christian Judaism. In the first-century, however, it is probable that most Gentile converts were God-fearers and had already associated themselves with Judaism without fully converting, thus somewhat mitigating the problem.

from other Jewish groups in this way is nothing but the unconscious consequence of confessional bias. Furthermore, discussing the relationship between early Christianity and early Judaism in the typical way is a comparison of incommensurable units. "No one," he writes, "has ever dreamed of comparing Essenism or Pharisaism, for example, to 'early Judaism'—it would immediately appear absurd."¹⁶ Likewise, according to Boccaccini, it is absurd to treat early Christianity as if it were anything other than a species of Judaism alongside Essenism, Pharisaism and the other Jewish groups of the Second Temple period.

The Christ-movement was not exactly like other Jewish groups since one could be both a Christ-follower and a Pharisee (Acts 15:5). Presumably one could combine confession of Christ with the (largely halakhic) distinctive tenets of other Jewish groups as well (though denial of belief in resurrection would preclude one from being both a Sadducee and a Christ-follower). Nonetheless, Boccaccini makes a very important point. It is indisputable that during the first century Christianity was a species of Judaism. It follows from this simple fact that we should interpret the New Testament documents as documents of Second Temple Judaism, not as documents of a religion that had broken away from Judaism. As Boccaccini notes, "Nobody, whether scholar or student, would ever ask if a certain document is Pharisaic or Jewish, Essene or Jewish."¹⁷ To do so would be immediately recognized as a category error. Rather, they would ask questions like whether it is Essene in distinction from Sadducean or Pharisaic. Likewise, it is a category error to treat the "Christian" documents of the New Testament as being the product of something

¹⁶ Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 23.

¹⁷ Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 21.

other than Judaism (including those that may have been composed by Gentile converts).

Boccaccini goes so far as to classify even contemporary Christianity a Judaism and to state: "the frenzy with which both Christians and Jews argue that Christianity is no longer a Judaism must be recognized as a consequence of confessional bias. For a historian of religion, Rabbinism and Christianity are simply different Judaisms."¹⁸ There is a valid technical point in this statement. Christianity is in a line of direct descent from Second Temple Judaism just as much as Rabbinic Judaism is. However, Boccaccini can be faulted for not considering the fact that religious movements can change so far from their parent and sibling faiths that it is no longer helpful or appropriate to refer to them as versions of the same genus. This is, as the name suggests, basic to the study of contemporary New Religious Movements and should not be dismissed in the study of ancient religious movements.¹⁹ To use the imagery of evolutionary biology, over the course of time a species can develop along a trajectory quite different from those followed by the majority of other species within its genus. It can even develop its own sub-species. Eventually the sub-species are sufficiently distinguishable from one another as to be classified as species, and they differ sufficiently from their cousins in the evolutionary family tree that they comprise a new genus.²⁰ Something like this seems to have occurred in the case of

¹⁸ Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 18.

¹⁹ Some movements classified as NRMs are arguably still a part of the broader religious traditions in which they originate, even if on the periphery. Others, however, have clearly developed so far from the parent tradition as to best be classified as a distinct religious tradition. Interestingly, one sometimes sees NRMs that evolve away from the parent religion only to later develop closer to it (e.g., mainstream Mormonism).

²⁰ I use this image because it is suggested by Boccaccini's analogy with genus and species. A more appropriate analogy, however, is with the development of dialects and languages, whether supposing a wave theory or a proto-language approach.

Marcion's version of Christianity with its outright rejection of the Old Testament.

Continuing the biological analogy further, Marcionism represents a case of punctuated equilibrium. Had that species survived, would it too remain a Judaism?

It is possible that mainstream Christianity began as a species of Judaism but evolved into its own genus. Whether Boccaccini is correct or whether Christianity did eventually evolve into something non-Jewish will not detain us here. What matters with respect to Hebrews is that he is entirely correct about Christianity in the first century: it was a form of Judaism. Whatever view we take on Boccaccini's insistence that Christianity continues to be a Judaism, for the study of the Christ-movement in the first two centuries (at least) James Charlesworth's advice should be heeded: "we certainly must not proceed as if Christianity were antithetical to or clearly distinct from Judaism."²¹ This is not to deny that "Jews" and "Christians" could not be spoken of in contrasting ways during this period, but the "Judaism" and "Christianity" of these contrasts are primarily sets of differing practices (circumcision, Sabbath, food laws), not "religions" in the sense that we tend to think. The Jews and Christians of these contrasts would belong to competing factions of the same religious tradition. Though not stated in quite this way, this can readily enough be seen in Judith Lieu's discussion of the early second-century writers Ignatius and Polycarp.²² If this is the case in the second century, then it holds all the more in the first.

²¹ James Charlesworth, foreword to Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, xviii.

²² Judith M. Lieu, *Image & Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 23-102. A strong case can be made that sometimes the "Jews" referred to by second-century writers were in fact Christ-followers. For one such argument, see E. Leigh Gibson, "The Jews and Christians in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*," in *Ways that Never Parted* (ed. Becker and Reed), 145-58.

Religions and Ethnic Groups

Today most people understand contemporary Christianity and Judaism to be mutually exclusive religions.²³ That is not what they were when Hebrews was written. One could press the point even further by arguing with Wilfred Cantwell Smith that the concepts of *religion* and *religions* are alien to the ancient world and unhelpful in the modern world.²⁴ As he famously demonstrated, the languages of the ancient world had no words denoting our abstract concept of *religion*. Nor did the ancients speak of religions. If one follows Smith, then we should not speak of Judaism and Christianity in the ancient world. We should instead speak of Jews and Christians and their respective religious traditions (or, in the first century, their shared religious tradition).

There is much of value in Smith's discussion that should be heeded by the biblical scholar. In particular, we must be careful about referring to ancient religions. However, it is not clear that he has made his case against ever speaking of ancient religion or religions. His argument sometimes comes close to committing the fallacy of confusing word and concept. It does not follow that it is inappropriate to speak of religion and religions in the ancient world just because the Latin *religio* and comparable terms in other languages are not equivalent to our terms. Related to this, Smith does not consider the possibility that much of the same conceptual freight was carried by more than one term. Philosophy, for example, was a much broader notion in the ancient world and had considerable overlap with our notion of religion,

²³ Messianic Jews and other Christians who affirm the legitimacy of the movement do not, as least in the case of ethnic Jews.

²⁴ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1962, 1963; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 15-50.

particularly with the metaphysical components of theology and ethics. Unlike other cults, Judaism supplied its adherents with many of these elements. This is probably why ancient writers sometimes refer to Judaism as a philosophy. But even if nothing approximating the concept was present, it does not follow that the concept cannot be applied by modern scholars in their studies of the ancient world. It is appropriate to use any concept as a tool that proves helpful. Problems only arise when we assume that ancient persons thought in terms of those same concepts.

Further problems arise because Smith's proposals are motivated by a rather overt agenda that sometimes leads him to minimize the ancient evidence. His chief concern is not actually about whether it is appropriate to speak of religion or religions in the ancient world. Rather, his goal is to dissolve the theological/philosophical problem of religious pluralism and its outworking in contemporary society. His two-part strategy for accomplishing this consists of (1) deconstructing the idea that there are religions in the first place, and (2) giving an account of what the various religious traditions really are. To his credit, Smith recognizes that for his strategy to work Christians, Muslims and some Jews will have to re-conceptualize how they understand their own religions and reformulate their theologies so as to avoid exclusive and realist claims.²⁵ What he is not so upfront about is the fact that his account of the nature of the various religious traditions is itself a theological account that at the end of the day is no less exclusivist than the theologies that create the problems of religious pluralism to begin with.²⁶ If one is not

²⁵ Smith, *Meaning*, 197-99.

²⁶ For a useful collection of essays both supportive and critical of the kind of philosophical religious pluralism that Smith advocates, see Philip L. Quinn and Kevin Meeker, eds., *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). These essays do not often address Smith's

sympathetic to his theological account, then one will not share his vested interest in avoiding references to religion and religions in antiquity.

There may, however, be other reasons to avoid speaking of religions in the ancient world, particularly with respect to Judaism. Philip F. Esler, for example, believes that the concerns raised by Smith and others raise "grave caveats over the usefulness of the notion of religion as an interpretive category."²⁷ He does not believe that any of these concerns disqualifies religion entirely as useful in the study of early Christian texts provided that it is properly modeled at an appropriate level of abstraction. But rather than elaborate on what might constitute a proper model, he feels that the difficulties with the concept warrant trying something else.²⁸ His preference is ethnicity. Esler discusses in detail theories of ethnicity and criteria for identifying ethnic groups.²⁹ This is followed by a strong argument in favor of abandoning references to Jews and Judaism in the ancient world. He begins by arguing that Ἰουδαῖοι was an ethnic term referring to people associated with the territory called Ἰουδαία.³⁰ It has long been recognized that the word *Jew* was derived from the name of the ancient kingdom of Judah and the subsequent provinces of Yehud and Judea. Esler is not alone in insisting that Ἰουδαῖος continued to be a strictly ethnic term in the early centuries of the Common Era. Daniel Boyarin, for example, concisely states a position nearly identical to Esler's when he writes:

work, but most of what they say about John Hick's positions (which are constantly addressed) will apply with only minor modification. That Smith's and Hick's views in this area are nearly the same is made clear in Hick's 1978 foreword to Smith's book.

²⁷ Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 8.

²⁸ Elsewhere Esler says that there "was political religion and domestic religion, but not really 'religion' per se" (Philip F. Esler, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century," in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World: A Survey of Recent Scholarship* [ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbock and John M. Court; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 25).

²⁹ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 40-53.

³⁰ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 63-8.

"Jew," accordingly, is a member of the paradigm that includes "Greek," while "Christian" identifies another semantic field—perhaps one that included such entities as "Pharisee," "Sadducee," and "Essene." Becoming a Jew was like becoming a Spartan or an Athenian (not in the full political sense of these latter, as there was no formal civic identity of "Jew"). "Jew" was clearly an ethnic identity, even if a mutable one. Of course, entry into the community carried with it the requirement that one behave according to the mores of one's new community. It, nevertheless, remained a matter of essentially ethnic or national identification and identity-formation.³¹

Rather than place *Jew* in quotation marks as Boyarin does, Esler prefers to speak of *Judeans*. He feels that *Jew* is too tainted by its common use as a religious designation and that it fails to convey the territorial flavor of the word Ἰουδαῖος. He even suggests that it is morally questionable to speak of *Jews* in the first century in light of anti-Semitism.³² Esler does not indicate at what point we should switch from referring to Judeans to referring to Jews. However, he disputes Shaye Cohen's claim that beginning in the second century B.C.E. these terms began to take on religious meanings that supplemented their ethnic connotations.³³ On Cohen's view these words can be translated either as ethnic or ethno-religious terms from the latter half of the Second Temple period onwards. Esler, however, argues that they should

³¹ Boyarin, "Semantic Differences," 69-70.

³² Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 68. The reasoning seems to be that if there were no Jews, only Judeans, then modern Jews cannot be held liable for the death of Jesus and a core plank of anti-Semitism is removed. But it is doubtful that the death of Jesus is a primary motivation for most contemporary anti-Semitism, and more doubtful that this would have any affect on the thinking of people prejudiced against Jews. Regardless, Esler's strategy may in fact serve to foster the most dominant form of contemporary anti-Semitism, Arab anti-Semitism (technically a misnomer since Arabs are Semitic, but less cumbersome than "Arab anti-Jewism"). By breaking the link between modern Jews and ancient Judeans, Esler comes precariously close to providing fodder for the popular contentions of Arab anti-Semites that there were no Jews, Temple, etc. in the ancient land of Israel and that all modern Jews are descended from Khazars and Europeans, not from an ancient Semitic people. If anti-Semitism is relevant to how we translate Ἰουδαῖος, then this gives support for translating it as *Jew* rather than *Judean*. It is doubtful that modern Jewish scholars will be inclined to adopt Esler's terminology and obscure their continuity with first-century Jews/Judeans. This continuity may be a necessary component of Zionist political views that some dislike, but that is not a good reason to obscure historical fact.

³³ Cf. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 137.

always be taken as ethnic terms at least through 135 C.E..³⁴ As for the term *Christians*, Esler refers instead to *Christ-followers* (which I have adopted, though not exclusively).

Esler's discussion is provocative and he gives one much to consider. He is entirely correct to stress the ethnic dimension of ancient Judaism. *Ἰουδαῖος* and *Ἰουδαϊσμός* did begin as strictly ethnic terms and continued to carry strong ethnic associations in the first century. Thus, there are many contexts in which the appropriate translations are Judean and Judeanism. Hebrews specialists should take the ethnic dimension of ancient Judaism much more seriously than they do when casually speaking about conversions *from Judaism to Christianity*. However, it seems to me that Esler may press the point too far. Full assessment of his proposals would require careful consideration of many Jewish/Judean texts to see if his proposals can be consistently applied and that cannot be done here. But on other grounds I remain sympathetic to Cohen's argument. Because this issue affects whether we can even speak of Judaism in the first-century, here I will offer four related reasons why I am not presently convinced by Esler's argument against Cohen.

In the introduction to their recent anthology *Ethnicity*, Hutchinson and Smith list six features that *ethnies* habitually exhibit in varying degrees.³⁵ Esler endorses their list as a set of common diagnostic features that capture the distinctiveness of ethnic groups in distinction from other groups such as families, football teams or school classes.³⁶ Some of these features can be found in other kinds of groups, but when a group exhibits most of these features, this is sufficient to classify it as an ethnic group. As already indicated, Esler is persuaded by Wilfred Cantwell Smith's

³⁴ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 68-74.

³⁵ John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6-7.

³⁶ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 43.

arguments regarding the lack of fit between religion and the premodern world and prefers to employ the concept of ethnicity in its stead. Following Hutchinson and Smith, Esler conceives of religion as an aspect of ethnicity and faults Cohen for failing to recognize this when he argues that *Ιουδαῖος* began as a term of ethnic identity but evolved to become also a term of religious identity.³⁷

But is religion always an aspect of ethnicity? In the modern world, at least in the West, it seems obvious that individuals can have a religious identity that is not nested within their ethnic identity. They can even have religious identities that run contrary to the traditional religious aspect of their ethnic identity without changing ethnic identities. For example, one can be born in Ireland, proud of her Irish heritage, boast of her willingness to die for her land but identify as a Buddhist, atheist or even as a Protestant instead of a Catholic. This may create tension with other members of the ethnic group, but this would not be sufficient grounds for saying that this person has exchanged ethnic identities. Rather, it shows that the religious aspect of an ethnic identity is separable from the other aspects and can be changed in a way that some of the others cannot.

It can be granted that in the ancient world religion was embedded in home, state and other institutions of society in a way that is only rarely found today. This ensured a close association between religious belief and ethnicity. But it is well-known that people in the ancient world could convert to become *Ιουδαῖοι*³⁸ as well as to religious movements that seem to have become dissociated from any particular

³⁷ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 73.

³⁸ For example, see Josephus' account of the conversion of members of the Adiabenean royal family in *Antiquities* 20.17-95.

ethnic group (e.g., the cults of Mithra and Osiris).³⁹ The fact that non-Judeans would adopt Judean customs in order to fully worship the God of Israel looks a lot like religious conversion in the modern world does, even if "religions" were not primarily thought of as systems of belief embodied in circumscribed, voluntary communities. This suggests that during the Roman occupation of the Near East the relationship between ethnicity and religious belief and practice was not so close that it was inconceivable for a member of one ethnic group to adopt the beliefs and practices originally associated with another. Another way of putting it is to say that cult was becoming separable from cult/ure. This is likewise suggested by the fact that a Judean could apostatize and become an adherent of Greek or Roman cults (e.g., Philo's nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander). Conversion and apostasy *could* lead to such thorough re-socialization that a person effectively acquires a new ethnicity, but this does not inevitably follow.⁴⁰ The fact that people could convert and apostatize without necessarily changing ethnicities means that "religion" could be sufficiently distinguished from the rest of an ethnic identity so as to be chosen. A cult that is separable from the cult/ure in which it arose exhibits a hallmark feature of a religion. Since the Judean cult seems to have become such a cult, albeit without ceasing to have close association with ethnic Judeans, this would seem to give some warrant for translating Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαϊσμός as *Jew* and *Judaism* in certain contexts. Perhaps the phenomena of conversion and apostasy and the apparent ability to distinguish cult from cult/ure can be adequately explained in terms of ethnicity rather than

³⁹ Conversion to other religious traditions did not, however, entail exclusive devotion to the deity of that cult. Judaism and Christianity were, as far as I am aware, unique in the ancient world for their religious exclusivism.

⁴⁰ Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 408) gives the impression that conversion to Judaism would inevitably lead to a new ethnicity but no grounds are given in support.

religion, but Esler does not indicate how he would go about doing so. I doubt that the model of ethnicity he employs will have the resources for the task as long as he endorses Hutchinson and Smith's list of common features exhibited by ethnic groups.

Second, Judean/Jewish religious commitment was significantly different from that of pagans. It was expected that the Jew would express cultic devotion exclusively to the God of Israel.⁴¹ It was expected that he or she would live in accordance with the law of the nation, regardless of where they lived. This law was considered authoritative revelation from the one God and provided a system of morality and the broad strokes of a metaphysic. These were things that non-Jews picked up from philosophical movements rather than from the cults in which they participated. Another way of putting this is that Judean/Jewish religious thought entailed the basic elements of a world-and-life view that governed one's living. This was the precursor to the modern notion of a religion and stood in stark contrast to the religious thought of other peoples. One might argue that this is sufficient grounds for saying that the Judean cult (and later Christianity) was the one religion in the ancient world, albeit differing in some ways from its modern counterpart. This too provides grounds for scholars to continue using *Jew* and *Judaism* when discussing the religious thought of the ancient world. *Contra* Esler, it is not intellectually indefensible to do so.⁴²

Esler faults Cohen for employing an inadequate concept of ethnicity and sees this as the root difficulty with Cohen's argument.⁴³ The third reason why I remain

⁴¹ For a recent assessment of challenges to this, see Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 29-48.

⁴² Cf. Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 68.

⁴³ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 69.

unconvinced by Esler's argument is that it can be faulted for this same reason. The list by Hutchinson and Smith upon which Esler relies is demonstrably inadequate for identifying ethnic groups in distinction from contemporary religious groups that are not ethnic groups. If that is so, then their list of features is also an inadequate tool for establishing that an ancient group was an *ethnie* in distinction from a religious movement that was not an *ethnie* and Cohen's position remains viable.

The six features Hutchinson and Smith list as being commonly exhibited by ethnic groups are:

1. a common *proper name*, to identify and express the 'essence' of the community;
2. a myth of *common ancestry*, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and that gives an *ethnie* a sense of fictive kinship, what has been termed a 'super-family';
3. shared *historical memories*, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;
4. one or more *elements of common culture*, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language;
5. a link with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation by the *ethnie*, only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples;
6. a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie's* population.

An example. One could argue that the Latter-day Saints are an ethnic group. They are known as the Mormons because of their belief that the Book of Mormon is an ancient work of scripture that was translated by their founding prophet "by the gift and power of God."⁴⁴ Their formal name reflects the belief that they are the

⁴⁴ The names of many ethnic groups are associated with the name of the land inhabited by them or their ancestors. It is likely that the names of many lands were derived from the names of the peoples that settled there rather than vice-versa. In the modern West this process can be seen in the case of those areas in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio known as "Amishland." The name is derived from the name of the inhabitants, the Amish (who are in turn named after an early religious leader). Though it is unlikely to happen, one could easily imagine the name becoming a formal political designation if the Amish were to become politically and economically dominant. This undoubtedly occurred in the ancient world many times over as people groups settled in new lands. Thus, one should not press the connection between the name of a land and the name of an ethnic group so far as to insist that a group cannot be an ethnic group unless their name is associated with a specific land.

chosen people of God. The myth of common ancestry is maintained in several ways. For example, they believe that humans were literally begotten by God in a premortal realm and are therefore literally spirit-brothers and sisters.⁴⁵ They believe that Latter-day Saints are all literally descended from the ancient tribes of Israel, including the most recent converts—regardless of their race or place of birth. (Some Mormons believe that a genetic transformation takes place to make this the case—definitely *fictive* kinship, but believed nonetheless.) Thirdly, the core membership and leadership of the LDS movement in the inter-mountain west of the United States are mostly descendants of the nineteenth-century Mormon pioneers that settled the area. Related to this, the events of early Mormon history and the migration of the Latter-day Saints give modern Mormons a sense of shared identity. Every July 24th this heritage is celebrated in Pioneer Day commemorations marking the entrance of Mormon pioneers into the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

The shared history and distinctive beliefs and practices of the Saints constitute elements of a shared culture. These include dietary regulations, special temple garments worn under regular clothes and rights of passage that include special temple ceremonies (the endowment) and, for young men, a two year mission. The LDS have an identifiable homeland in Utah and a symbolic connection with the state of Missouri. They believe Missouri is the location of the Garden of Eden and the place to which Jesus will return to establish the New Jerusalem. In order for this to happen the LDS believe that they must eventually relocate to Missouri and establish

⁴⁵ Mormon beliefs about the nature of God, human beings and the universe are very different from those found in the major branches of Christianity. See further the essays in Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

themselves there and build a special temple. Lastly, the LDS are well-known for their strong sense of solidarity.

To some degree the Latter-day Saints exhibit all six features that Hutchinson and Smith list for an ethnic group. There is even an entry on the Mormons in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*.⁴⁶ The similarities between the Latter-day Saints and Jews are also often noted. Sociologist Armand L. Mauss summarizes some of these as follows:

One of the more successful and meaningful applications of the term *ethnic group* is probably to the Jews, and one suspects that many who are inclined to use the same term for the Mormons will have the Jewish example at least in the backs of their minds. It is an attractive comparison, for there are certainly compelling parallels between the Jews and the Mormons. Both claim literal, Israelite origin. Both claim a special status in the divine historical scheme. Both cherish a history of having endured and prevailed over persecution. Each identifies to some extent with a certain homeland. Both possess a worldwide sense of community based on common teachings, rituals, myths, and definitions of reality. Both continue to be viewed with a certain suspicion or hostility, sometimes organized (as with the anti-Semitic and anti-Mormon movements that still occur in North America), sometimes only subtle or muted.⁴⁷

If the Latter-day Saints constitute an ethnic group, then perhaps we should list "religions" as one kind of ethnic group (even if there are religions that would not qualify). In turn, it ends up begging the question to insist that it is inappropriate to refer to ancient *Jews* and their religion of *Judaism* on the grounds that there were no religions (or at least no Judaism), only ethnic groups (or at least the Judean ethnic group) for which the religious was but an element of ethnicity. For, the example of

⁴⁶ Dean L. May, "Mormons," in Eric A. Eliason, ed., *Mormons & Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 47-75; repr. with revisions from *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (ed. Stephen Thernstrom; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 720-31. Among the topics May discusses are Mormon history, culture, economic institutions, ethnic consciousness, politics, social structure, family and kinship, intergroup relations and group maintenance.

⁴⁷ Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 64.

the Latter-day Saints would prove that there could be ethnic groups for which religion is the primary aspect of identity under which all other aspects are subsumed.⁴⁸ If so, then one cannot rule out the possibility that the Judean *ethnie* had evolved into just this kind of specialized ethnicity, which for all practical purposes is indistinguishable from a religious identity, and Cohen's proposal remains a possibility. Alternatively, Esler could agree with Mauss that "it begins to become ludicrous if we go far beyond the common religious tradition (story) and attempt to define Mormons from all the cultures and colors of the world as somehow constituting a new and separate ethnic category."⁴⁹ After all, Esler is eager to avoid the pigeon-holing fallacy and does not say that every group that displays all six features is necessarily an ethnic group. But then he needs to tell us on what basis he distinguishes between ethnic and non-ethnic groups that exhibit all the features that Hutchinson and Smith list. The easiest way to do this would be to supplement their list either by adding a feature that is *necessary* for a group to exhibit in order to constitute an *ethnie*, or by adding some feature that groups like the Mormons display which *precludes* them from being ethnic groups. But adding such a feature would seem to be incompatible with the approach Esler adopts which sees these features as diagnostic, not constitutive of the identity and boundary of an ethnic group.⁵⁰ In either case, the dilemma I have presented with this counterexample demonstrates that Esler's preferred account of ethnicity is not fully adequate and this renders his argument unconvincing.

⁴⁸ This would run contrary to the concept of ethnicity Esler employs. He states: "no one feature [of those listed by Hutchinson and Smith] can be determinative of, or a sine qua non for, ethnicity" (*Conflict and Identity*, 44).

⁴⁹ Mauss, *Angel and the Beehive*, 65-66.

⁵⁰ *Conflict and Identity*, 43.

My final reason for remaining unconvinced by Esler's argument is that if one accepts it, then it would seem that consistency demands that one never refer to Jews or Judaism. Modern Jews exhibit all the features of an ethnic group in Hutchinson's and Smith's list. At no point in history have the Jewish people not exhibited these features. If Esler is right, then we should stop referring to *Jews* and *Judaism* altogether and refer instead to *Judeans* and *Judeanism*, even in reference to the contemporary world. But then we must ask if there is really any difference between these sets of terms. Esler thinks there is but he does not tell us what differences between ancient Judeans and modern Jews accounts for this. It cannot be that ancient Judeans constituted an ethnic group whereas modern Jews do not.

Esler does not go so far as to refer to modern Judeans and Judeanism. He indicates that at some point after 135 C.E. it becomes appropriate to refer to Jews and Judaism. This entails that Esler holds a position like Cohen's; they agree that at some point the terms Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαϊσμός evolve from purely ethnic terms to ethno-religious terms. Thus, their real disagreement is not *whether* it becomes appropriate to translate these words as ethno-religious terms, but *when* and perhaps *on what grounds*. The only indication Esler gives about when and why it becomes appropriate is when he states: "As long as the temple... stood, and even between 70 CE and 135 CE when there was a hope that it might be rebuilt, 'Judeans' is the only apt rendering in English of Ἰουδαῖοι. Perhaps in relation to texts from subsequent centuries, when they had no real hope of a return to the homeland and the cultural indicia by which they expressed their identity changed dramatically... it may be appropriate to

translate Ἰουδαῖοι or *Iudaei* as 'Jews,' but certainly not in the first century CE."⁵¹ But why allow for a change even then? Esler says that after 135 C.E. there was "no real hope" of returning to the homeland and rebuilding the Temple. Ancient Jews/Judeans after 135 would not have agreed to this denigration of their hopes. Their hope for the Temple's rebuilding and a return to Palestine is enshrined in the rituals and prayers codified in the continuing rabbinic consolidation of Judaism after Bar Kochba's defeat. These hopes have been expressed in the synagogue on a weekly basis and yearly in the Passover seder ever since. It is true that there was little practical possibility of these hopes being fulfilled until the twentieth century, but the hope and identity they express were nonetheless real, a fact attested by the remarkable return of Jews to their ancient homeland during the last century.

Esler, Boyarin and others who take their approach are not necessarily wrong. I agree that ancient Judaism was *primarily* an ethnic tradition, but I am not presently persuaded that it was *exclusively* an ethnic tradition and that Cohen is therefore wrong. Until I have had opportunity to carefully consider a number of relevant texts, I will play it safe and continue to refer to Jews and Judaism in some first-century contexts. But even if I am overly-cautious and it turns out that they are correct, then this gives us all the more reason to not treat the first-century Christ-movement as a religion distinct from the religion of Judaism. In either case we should read Hebrews as a document of Second Temple Judaism/Judeanism.

⁵¹ Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 68.

Reading Hebrews in a Post-parting of the Ways Way: An Illustration

Almost all previous discussion of the background, occasion and purpose of Hebrews has assumed that Christianity and Judaism were for the most part already distinct religions very much in the modern sense. This is most evident in the dominant theory that the recipients of Hebrews were on the verge of lapsing from Christianity back into Judaism. Bruce Metzger's articulation of this theory is typical: "The recipients had grown lax in their faith and remiss in attendance at the divine service (10:23-25). Many of them felt themselves drawn to the Jewish liturgy, and *were on the point of renouncing Christianity and returning to their ancestral Jewish faith....* [The author urges] that Christ and his work are superior to anything that Judaism can offer."⁵² But the same anachronistic assumptions affect other views of Hebrews as well. For example, George MacRae observes, "There is nothing in Hebrews that clearly suggests the danger of a relapse into Judaism." But he then continues by saying that it is therefore best "to assume the sermon is addressed to Christians in general and not merely to *former Jews*."⁵³ More recently, Richard Johnson, who likewise rejects the relapse theory, has asserted that "the author and recipients were *former members of Hellenistic Jewish society*."⁵⁴ The possibility is never countenanced that the recipients could have simply considered themselves Jews who believed that the hopes of Israel were being fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth and the movement he founded. The anachronistic assumptions that blind scholars to this probability have an impact on the exegesis of passages relevant to reconstructing the situation

⁵² Bruce Manning Metzger, *The New Testament: Its background, growth and content* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 249. Emphasis added.

⁵³ George W. MacRae, *Hebrews* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1983), 7. Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Richard W. Johnson, *Going Outside the Camp: The Sociological Function of the Levitical Critique in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 209; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 22.

Hebrews addresses. This can be readily illustrated by looking at some of the interpretations assigned to the book's climactic exhortation to "go to him outside the camp" (Heb 13:13). Other passages could also be cited to illustrate the point, particularly those contrasting the two covenants and those arguing for the superiority of Christ over the institutions of the levitical cultus.⁵⁵ But this verse is chosen because it will feature largely in the argument of subsequent chapters. Here are several representative examples of how Hebrews 13:13 has been interpreted.

B.F. Westcott: "Christians are now called upon to withdraw from Judaism even in its first and purest shape."⁵⁶

Floyd Filson: "It could well be that there were Christians who continued the ties with Judaism which the Church certainly had in its earliest days.... [T]he situation could have arisen in which an exhortation was needed to 'go forth' to a clear Christian worship and a life definitely separate from Judaism."⁵⁷

F.F. Bruce: "In this context the 'camp' stands for the established fellowship and ordinances of Judaism."⁵⁸

A.T. Hanson: "The comparison is between something in Judaism and something in Christianity." Despite the 'other-worldly' tone of v. 14, the phrase 'outside the camp' in context "seems much more likely to signify 'outside Judaism' than 'away from the world.'"⁵⁹

Hugh Montefiore: "Christians are here exhorted to cut themselves off from Judaism."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ This lies behind the characterization of Hebrews' theology as supersessionist. According to Hebrews one covenant of priesthood and sacrifice has superseded another, but it is a mistake to infer from this that Hebrews presents a theology in which Christianity replaces Judaism or Christians (i.e. non-Jews) replace Jews as the people of God. Unfortunately this mistake continues to be made, even in works devoted to the parting of the ways. Most notably, see Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 110-27.

⁵⁶ B.F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1892; reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 442.

⁵⁷ Floyd V. Filson, *'Yesterday': A Study of Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13* (London: SCM, 1967), 63.

⁵⁸ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 381, 382. More recently this position is taken by William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols., WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991), 545-46.

⁵⁹ A.T. Hanson, "The Reproach of the Messiah in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Studia Evangelica VII* (1982): 239.

⁶⁰ Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 246.

Donald Hagner: it is "an appeal to leave Judaism behind"; the readers are "called to leave behind the security and comfort of Judaism" and "to endure the persecution that will come their way when they remain true to their Christian faith."⁶¹

The impression one gets from quotations like these is that their authors consider the parting of the ways to be essentially completed when Hebrews was written. The same impression is given by William Lane when he asserts that it is certain the writer "appreciated the historical and theological lines of differentiation between Jewish Christianity and Judaism."⁶² In every one of these characterizations Christianity is Christianity and Judaism is Judaism; the recipients are fundamentally Christians, possibly Jewish Christians, but not Christian Jews. The writer of Hebrews is taken to understand Christianity as a religion distinct from Judaism, whereas the Christianity of his readers is also a distinct religion but happens to still be inappropriately intertwined with Judaism and needs to break free. To use a biological image, the readers' Christianity is like a cell that is mostly divided from a parent cell but hasn't quite broken free and needs a little help to do so.

As an interpretation of Hebrews 13:13, I see little to commend the view that the camp represents Judaism. If for no other reason, as Paul Ellingworth states, "to understand this passage as an appeal to abandon Judaism for Christianity is foreign to the whole scope of the author's thought, which moves consistently within the category of God's twofold action on behalf of his one people."⁶³ But some interpreters do not feel the force of Ellingworth's observation and still manage to equate the camp with Judaism. Two recent examples:

⁶¹ Donald Hagner, *Hebrews* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 242, 243.

⁶² Lane, *Hebrews*, cxxxv.

⁶³ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 716.

George Guthrie: "Believers must reject the tempting security of Judaism and be resolute in their identification with Christ.... The 'camp' represents the religion of Judaism, grounded in the tabernacle rituals of the old covenant."⁶⁴

Norman H. Young: "The problem is not a turning back so much as a failure to go forward and separate from Judaism completely in the first place.... timidity in expressing their Christian faith in a bold and forthright manner and a tendency to fraternize with the synagogue was the problem the author of Hebrews was addressing."⁶⁵

Such readings are simply alien to Hebrews and beg important questions. Is there any precedent in the first-century for using "camp" to refer to Judaism? (There is not.) Where does the author ever refer to Judaism as a religion? (He does not.) What in Hebrews would give us warrant for believing that its author had a concept of Christianity as a religion distinct from Judaism? (Nothing.) The Christ-followers to whom Hebrews was sent are members of a distinct community, to be sure, but there is nothing in Hebrews to suggest that it is anything other than a distinct community *within* Judaism. As Marie Isaacs has written, an "important difference between a first- and twentieth-century reading of Hebrews is that, for us, Judaism and Christianity have long since gone their separate ways, whereas for our author they had yet to become different religions."⁶⁶ The only real religious options for the author and his readers are the varieties of Judaism on the one hand and the varieties of paganism on the other. Any call to leave Judaism would not have been perceived as a call to "fully enter Christianity" but a call to apostatize from the living God of Israel.

Of course, Hebrews 13:13 has been interpreted in other ways, usually in favor of situations focused on "the danger of a loss of hope and confidence, of abandoning

⁶⁴ George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 440.

⁶⁵ Norman H. Young, "'Bearing His Reproach' (Heb 13.9-14)," *NTS* 48 (2002): 253.

⁶⁶ Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 221.

the Christian faith in the face of pressures of one kind or another."⁶⁷ These views have the advantage of not anachronistically equating the camp with Judaism. Many of them, though, simply swap anachronisms, sometimes reading even more implausible notions into the reference such as a call to secularity,⁶⁸ a call to leave urban life with all its complexity,⁶⁹ a call to render gratitude and leave behind one's place in human society.⁷⁰ Furthermore, while the saner of these interpretations could be parsed out in terms of a Christian confession within Judaism,⁷¹ it seems that most scholars who adopt them implicitly adopt the same basic assumption as those who adopt the traditional view—it is the *Christian faith* that the readers are in danger of abandoning, understood as a religion distinct from Judaism rather than a confession *within* Judaism. And this assumption works its way into the interpretation of Hebrews in numerous other ways, perhaps most notably in the interpretation of Hebrews' contrasts and the axiomatic way in which its cultic language is spiritualized or taken to be entirely symbolic.

The tendency for New Testament scholars to presuppose an essentially post-parting of the ways situation in their investigations is by no means limited to Hebrews specialists. The assumption is very natural given the long-standing obviousness of the distinction between Judaism and Christianity. It was really only after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls that scholars began to appreciate the

⁶⁷ R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews* (NCB; Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 16.

⁶⁸ Helmut Koester, "'Outside the Camp': Hebrews 13.9-14," *HTR* 55 (1962): 299-315.

⁶⁹ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 571, 577.

⁷⁰ David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 501-502.

⁷¹ E.g., Harold W. Attridge's view that the call here is "equivalent of the call to take up the cross" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 399) and Gordon's understanding of the call as "a kind of inverted entrance liturgy" (*Hebrews*, 169).

pluralism of Second Temple Judaism and we are still coming to terms with that. It took longer for scholars to begin realizing that "Christianity" and Judaism were not clearly separated until sometime well into the second century, if even then (the fourth century is increasingly cited as the key formative period for both traditions).⁷² It is understandable that a few Hebrews specialists might continue to take for granted what was universally assumed by New Testament scholars until relatively recent years. But the widespread persistence of these assumptions highlights the insular character of contemporary Hebrews scholarship. And these erroneous assumptions have distorted the interpretation of Hebrews. We do well, then, to reexamine the epistle on the corrected assumption that its author and readers would *not* have understood the Jesus movement to which they belonged to constitute a religion apart from Judaism. Hebrews should be intentionally read as a document of Second Temple Judaism.

The Christ-movement of Hebrews and Second Temple Judaism(s)

To say that Hebrews should be read as a document of Second Temple Judaism begs a question that must now be addressed. Is it appropriate to speak of Second Temple Judaism? Or were the differences between various Jewish groups so substantive that we should instead follow Neusner's cue and refer instead to "Judaisms" in the plural?

The basic point that Neusner's terminology intends to make is an important corrective to the earlier tendency to speak of a normative Judaism in the Second

⁷² See the essays in Becker and Reed, *Ways that Never Parted*.

Temple period that permitted little variety. It also tempers the tendency to make broad generalizations about the nature of Judaism based on one or two texts in a way that does not acknowledge the variety of viewpoints that are extant. However, Neusner pushes the pendulum to the opposite extreme. He states as a methodological axiom that "history, rightly done, must err on the side of radical nominalism."⁷³ Loux defines extreme nominalism as the view which endorses an ontology "incorporating only concrete particulars and holds that all claims apparently about universals are just disguised ways of making claims about concrete particulars."⁷⁴ Neusner's axiom is a methodological analogue of this metaphysical doctrine and faces analogous difficulties.⁷⁵ On this view there are only particulars which cannot serve as a basis for describing abstract realities that transcend the particulars. References to *Judaism* are really references to particular Judaisms, not to any transcendent entity or phenomenon. Applied to the study of ancient Jewish texts, this leads Neusner to see each text as expressing its own self-contained Judaism; there are as many Judaisms as there are texts. Somewhat inconsistently, this leads him to refer to such things as "the Judaism of the Mishnah," "the Judaism of the New Testament," etc. by which he does not mean "Judaism as it is expressed in X" or even the "version of Judaism found in X."⁷⁶ Rather, these texts really do represent different Judaisms that are classified in the set of Judaisms rather arbitrarily.⁷⁷

⁷³ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 23.

⁷⁴ Michael J. Loux, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (2nd ed.; London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 54.

⁷⁵ For helpful overviews of the various forms of nominalism along with critique, see Loux, *Metaphysics*, 54-95 or J.P. Moreland, *Universals* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

⁷⁶ A consistent application of Neusner's nominalist axiom would lead one to see the New Testament as a collection of particulars, leading one to refer to the Judaism of Mark's gospel, the Judaism of 1 Corinthians, the Judaism of Hebrews, etc., not to the Judaism of the New Testament. To refer to "the Judaism of the New Testament" makes sense only if we can postulate a realist relation of some kind

As with many, I find Neusner's talk of "Judaisms" and its nominalist underpinnings problematic. It is by no means obvious that radical nominalism should be a requirement for doing history well. To the contrary, a radical nominalism applied to history leaves us with a mass of particulars that can be assigned (not distinguished) into classes only on the basis of arbitrary criteria. If the radical nominalist is consistent, then he or she will take the view that the only kind of historical enterprise that is possible is the description of particular events, persons, etc. since, on this view, all we have evidence for are particulars. Because abstraction is not permitted, one cannot, strictly speaking, produce a history of any society, economy, culture, religion, intellectual movement or ideology. All one has are particulars that exist at different points of time with nothing to link them together as enduring entities or phenomena. Of course, some things do not strictly endure through time but are given a loose identity and perdure through time, but the radical nominalist would not be consistent to appeal to the realistically understood relationships that obtain between the particulars that allow for perduring identities.⁷⁸ Whether in metaphysics or history, radical nominalism is vicious and exacts a high

between the ideational content of the individual documents. This is much easier to do if one believes it is appropriate to speak of a single Judaism and its varieties since one could then see the NT documents as exemplifying a distinguishable variety of Judaism.

⁷⁷ In metaphysics one of the classic problems with robust forms of nominalism is the arbitrariness of grouping particulars together. For example, the fire engine instantiates a particular which we identify as a color and refer to as red. The stop sign instantiates a different particular, but we also identify it as a color and refer to it as red. But on the nominalist view these are not different instantiations of the same color or same redness (even if they appear identical to us) because the existence of universals is denied. We can group particulars together on the basis of similarity, but the properties of the particulars that we might cite as being similar are themselves particulars and we must ask on what basis we can say the properties are similar, leading to an infinite regress. Analogous problems attend Neusner's application of nominalism to the study of ancient Judaism(s).

⁷⁸ For the distinction between endurance and perdurance, see Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), s.v. "Perdurance."

price. But Neusner and those who follow him are rarely consistent in their application of his dictum and continue to write histories.

Neusner's nominalist approach to Judaism is an overreaction to the problem it seeks to redress. Preferable is the approach of those like Seth Schwartz who characterize ancient Judaism as "complex, capacious, and rather frayed at the edges" but nonetheless having a "normative core," at least before 70 C.E..⁷⁹ To speak of a normative core is not a return to the view that saw proto-rabbinic Judaism as "normative Judaism" from which all variety was non-normative deviation. But it is an acknowledgement that there were things that bound the various "Judaisms" into an identifiable and organic whole that we can properly refer to simply as Judaism. Schwartz identifies this core with what he terms the "three pillars" of ancient Judaism: the one God, the one Torah and the one Temple.⁸⁰ (Similar are James Dunn's "four pillars" of Second Temple Judaism, see below.) These "pillars" identify institutions and core beliefs around which almost all Jews in antiquity who desired to retain links with their ancestral customs and nation would base their religious thinking and practice. It is normative in the sense that both ancient Jews and non-Jews would have seen significant divergence in these areas as marks of deviance from what was commonly thought to be paradigmatically Jewish. Conflating Dunn's "pillars" and Sanders' notion of "common Judaism," Bauckham makes this point when he states: "Common Judaism—the temple, the torah, the one God who was worshipped in the temple and obeyed in following the torah, election as his covenant

⁷⁹ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), 2001, 9, 10.

⁸⁰ Schwartz, *Jewish Society*, 49.

people to whom he had given temple and torah—this common Judaism gave Jews common identity in very concrete ways."⁸¹

So, rather than speak of the Judaism of the New Testament (or of Hebrews) as one among many independent Judaisms, we should speak of the early Christ-movement as a movement within Second Temple Judaism. It is even appropriate to speak of early Christian Judaism. This terminology helps us to avoid the anachronism that is introduced when we speak of early Christianity, avoiding the latter term's connotations of "non-Jewish."⁸² This can also be accomplished if we refer to the Christ-movement rather than Christianity and to Christ-followers or "Christians" rather than Christians. Utilizing the distinctions of this terminology, we can say that at the time Hebrews was written there were "Christians" but no Christians, there was a Christ-movement but no Christianity.⁸³

Hebrews should be intentionally read as a document produced by a distinctive group within Second Temple Judaism; it should be read as a Jewish document and a "Christian" document, but not as a Christian document. When this is done, we see that the argument of Hebrews represents a decisive stage in the

⁸¹ Bauckham, "Parting of the Ways," 139; cf. E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE-66 CE* (London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 19-20, 47-54.

⁸² This should not be applied pedantically. There is, of course, an entirely valid sense in which we can speak of early Christianity, particularly when we are thinking primarily in terms of the origins of Christianity. But when discussing the New Testament and other early "Christian" texts, it misleads to speak of early Christianity as if what is meant is the early version of the later Christianity that was not recognized as a form of Judaism.

⁸³ I recognize that these terms are employed asymmetrically. One could reasonably argue that we should do the same for *Jews* and *Judaism*. But Judaism was an established system of belief and practice long before the Christ-movement began, thus the potential for anachronism is also somewhat asymmetrical. My concern is only to avoid terminology that subtly but anachronistically suggests that "Christians" were *de facto* Christians, not to develop a consistent nomenclature adequate for any investigation into ancient "Judaism" and "early Christianity" (which in any case may not be possible). For my purposes the asymmetry is heuristically useful.

parting of the ways.⁸⁴ In fact, the kind of argumentation found in Hebrews was essential to the parting of the ways. We can see this by examining the significance of the arguments in Hebrews against Dunn's "four pillars of Second Temple Judaism." These pillars are (1) monotheism; (2) YHWH's election of Abraham's descendants as his chosen people to possess the land of promise; (3) covenant focused on torah; and (4) the Temple at the center of the land.⁸⁵ The Christ-movement's attitude toward this last pillar, the Temple, was particularly decisive in the eventual creation of an identity for its members that was no longer perceived as Jewish. The argument of Hebrews touches on each of these pillars, but they have particular relevance for the Temple.

At this point some might object with the common assertion that the entire argument of Hebrews is formulated in terms of the tabernacle rather than Temple, indicating Hebrews' disinterest in contemporary realities. This literary technique allegedly shows that Hebrews is engaged in a purely theoretical discussion that is not about the Temple and its cultus at all; the argument is focused on the more fundamental things that the tabernacle and sacrifices symbolized. This explanation is not even remotely satisfying. There is no difficulty with the idea that Hebrews has the Temple and its cultus in view, whether one dates the book before or after the events of 70 C.E.. As has been pointed out by Barnabas Lindars,

A good case can be made for the decision to refer only to the provisions of the Law on the grounds that the author needed to contrast sacrifice under the old covenant with the sacrifice of Jesus, which inaugurates the new covenant.

⁸⁴ By "parting of the ways" I do not mean the process whereby the Christ-movement became a non-Jewish religion. I mean only the process whereby the members of the Christ-movement came to be identified as "Christians" *and* no longer thought of as Jews either by other Jews, the majority of their membership or the Greco-Roman populace more broadly.

⁸⁵ Dunn, *Partings*, 18-36.

Thus his argument required attention to the Law which gives the theoretical basis for sacrifice rather than the temple in which it was currently put into practice.⁸⁶

More importantly, however, the assumption that Hebrews could use cultic and sacrificial language in an entirely symbolic way is grossly anachronistic, Philo notwithstanding (though he allegorizes, often he clearly has the literal referents in view). Marie Isaacs makes this point admirably.

Whether one dates Hebrews as pre or post 70 CE, undoubtedly the Jerusalem temple and its cult would have been operational within recent experience. We therefore need to remind ourselves that its language would not have been understood principally as symbolic and metaphorical (as it later came to be, not only in Christianity but also in Judaism). Today we understand cultic language as figurative. Hence, if someone asks us, 'What did you sacrifice for Lent this year?' they hardly expect the answer, 'Two doves', let alone, 'A goat!' This is quite unlike the first century, where its principal referent would have been to a literal killing. If we are to understand Hebrews' use of cultic language, we need to take this seriously, and appreciate that the sacrificial cult was *not principally a metaphor but an operative system whose workings were far more extensive than this epistle's use of them.*⁸⁷

We must also remember that the Temple did not cease to be central to Jewish identity after 70 C.E.. Few Jews would have expected the loss of the Temple to be permanent. After all, as Richard Bauckham notes, the Temple had been destroyed before—and rebuilt. The period between the first destruction and rebuilding was more or less the length of the period between 70 C.E. and the Bar Kokhba revolt, a revolt whose primary motivation was rebuilding the Temple. "Consequently, in Christian literature of this period, between the two Jewish revolts, the temple issue is alive and well."⁸⁸ How much more this is the case for literature written before 70, of which I consider Hebrews an example. So it is not only plausible but practically

⁸⁶ Barnabas Lindars, "Hebrews and the Second Temple," in *Templum Amicitiae* (ed. William Horbury; JSNTSup 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 411; cf. Westcott, *Hebrews*, xl.

⁸⁷ Marie E. Isaacs, "Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *HeyJ* 38 (1997): 53. Emphasis added.

⁸⁸ Bauckham, "Parting of the Ways," 145.

required that we assume Hebrews has the Temple in view, whether as a functioning entity or one that many expect to be rebuilt. But why would Hebrews' arguments pertaining to the Temple be so important in the parting of the ways?

The "pillars" identified by Schwartz and Dunn accurately point to some of the most important beliefs and institutions that shaped the religious thought of virtually all Jews who took their religious beliefs seriously. It was not abstract theological beliefs that gave Jews a real sense of commonality with all other Jews. Rather, what unified the various Jewish movements and the mass of Jews who did not identify with any particular movement was a common descent from Abraham and a set of shared religious practices, many of which were centered on a shared institution, the Temple. This is what Sanders has termed "common Judaism." The Temple was the unifying factor not just in Palestine, but in the Diaspora as well. Diaspora Jews participated in Temple worship by making pilgrimage when possible and by paying a Temple tax annually so that sacrifices could be offered on their behalf.

The centrality of the Temple is particularly important to the parting of the ways since, as Bauckham demonstrates, it was the Temple more than any other institutional factor that affected whether a person could be considered a part of Israel by the majority of Jewish groups.⁸⁹ "The temple was the greatest, most meaningful boundary-marker between Jew and Gentile."⁹⁰ Gentiles were not permitted into the Temple on pain of death; they were not a part of Israel. The Qumran covenanters viewed themselves as temporarily separated from the Jerusalem Temple but accepted it in principle and could, if they wished, participate in its worship. Unlike the

⁸⁹ Bauckham, "Parting of the Ways," 139-41.

⁹⁰ Bauckham, "Parting of the Ways," 143.

Gentiles, Samaritans descended from Israel and accepted all the pillars of Judaism. The reason why they were not considered Jews was because they denied the validity of the Jerusalem Temple, not just contingently as with Qumran, but in principle. Arguing that the true Temple should be located on Mt. Gerizim was not an interpretation of the fourth pillar of Judaism that could be tolerated within the accepted boundaries of Jewish identity.

William Horbury observes that for Jews "the homeland and the sanctuary and its service were tangible realities and highly charged symbols."⁹¹ Nothing was more calculated to cause other Jews to regard a movement as outside Israel than a perceived attack on the Temple and its service. Within a Second Temple Jewish context, the argument of Hebrews is unprecedented in its stunning boldness. The author of Hebrews, a Christian Jew, argues at length *from the scriptures of Israel* against the continuing necessity of the Temple and its cultus. According to him, they have been superseded. They are shadows that pointed to coming realities; now that those realities have arrived, the shadows are soon to disappear (Heb 8:13). With the arrival of a new covenant, the institutions of the Mosaic covenant are made redundant. Most visibly, this means the levitical priesthood and its service have been superseded by Jesus' Melchizedek priesthood and self-sacrifice; the place of sacred space is no longer the Jerusalem Temple and the land of Israel but Jesus himself and the heavenly sanctuary to which he has made access.⁹² As C.F.D. Moule perceptively observed more than fifty years ago, "the whole burden of the Epistle can... be epitomized in two resounding ἔχομενs: we *have* a high priest, we *have* an altar: the

⁹¹ William Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (ed. John Barclay and John Sweet; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 207.

⁹² This point is the thesis of Isaacs, *Sacred Space*.

sanctuary and sacrifice are ours" (8:1, 13:10)—and this apart from the Mosaic institutions.⁹³

Up until the author of Hebrews presented these arguments with their bold conclusions, Christ-followers could readily participate in the service of the Temple. If arguments like these had not been made, or if they had been found unpersuasive, Christ-followers would not have had any fundamental problem in continuing to participate in the Temple or supporting the broader Jewish hopes for rebuilding it after 70 C.E. Even Pauline developments in the idea that Jesus' death was sacrificial would not have precluded offering sacrifices since, at most, it would only make some sin-offerings superfluous. As Bauckham observes, it would leave the greater part of the sacrificial cult unaffected.⁹⁴ There would still be biblical injunctions to offer the regular daily morning and evening burnt-offerings, purification offerings, thank offerings and various other shared sacrifices.

But Hebrews went beyond Paul and boldly argued from scripture that the whole sacrificial cult was now redundant and implied that continued participation in it had become unnecessary, perhaps even inappropriate. By arguing for this bold claim Hebrews "goes far beyond anything we find in non-Christian Jewish exegesis of the time, which, however much it may reinterpret Torah, nowhere suggests that any part of it could become obsolete."⁹⁵ Any group that accepted these claims would eventually cease to be considered a part of Israel by the majority of other Jewish groups. Thus, the kind of argumentation expressed in Hebrews represents a decisive stage in the parting of the ways. As far as we can determine, the author of Hebrews

⁹³ C.F.D. Moule, "Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament," *JTS* NS 1/1 (1950): 37.

⁹⁴ Bauckham, "Parting of the Ways," 150-51 n. 37.

⁹⁵ Marie E. Isaacs, "Why Bother With Hebrews?" *HeyJ* 43 (2002): 68.

was the first to make these bold claims; after Hebrews the way was open for the identity of the Christ-community to develop in distinction from the rest of Judaism.

It must be stressed that though Hebrews is a decisive stage in the parting of the ways, it is nonetheless squarely on the "pre-parting" side of the division. This is readily seen if we consider Hebrews in light of the practical identity markers applicable to the vast majority of ancient people who regarded themselves as Jewish and were so regarded by others. E.P. Sanders lists four of these:⁹⁶ (1) they believed in and worshiped the God of Israel; (2) they accepted the Hebrew Bible (often in translation) as revealing his will; (3) consequently they observed most aspects of the Mosaic law; (4) they identified themselves with the history and fate of the Jewish people. He summarizes these features by proposing that most Jews "believed in God and the Bible, thought of themselves as belonging to the people of Israel, and followed a way of life that was in general conformity with the Jewish law."⁹⁷ If one examines Hebrews in light of these identity markers, nothing will be found either explicitly or implicitly indicating that the author or readers did not identify as Jews.

The author and recipients obviously believed and worshipped the God of Israel. The author utilized Greek translations of Israel's sacred texts to convey to his readers God's will for them in their current situation. One of the functions of the commendations in chapter 11 is to link the readers to the history of Israel and encourage them to follow the precedents set by Israel's heroes. The only one of these identity markers about which there might be some question is observance of most aspects of the Mosaic Law since Hebrews nowhere indicates that the recipients

⁹⁶ E.P. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews: Commonalities, Overlaps and Differences," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 8.

⁹⁷ Sanders, "Dead Sea Sect," 8.

practiced circumcision, kept the Sabbath or followed dietary regulations. But we must remember that we should not expect any of these practices to be explicitly mentioned in a Jewish context since it would normally be understood that the Law was followed. Moreover, it is striking, in comparison with the Pauline epistles, that there is not the slightest indication that any of the readers might not observe the Mosaic Law. Whether the Mosaic regulations were applicable to Gentiles was contentious in the early Pauline mission. Non-Christian Jews and later Jewish Christian groups accused Paul of teaching that even Jewish Christ-followers should not observe the Law, suggesting that there was controversy about the status of the Law for Christian Jews in some places (for the Jewish Christian groups the evidence for this is post-70).⁹⁸ But Hebrews mentions none of this. Nor is there the slightest indication of the kind of ethnic tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers that are reflected at various points in the New Testament, not the least in Romans.⁹⁹ It has been suggested that Hebrews was written at a time after all tension had ended.¹⁰⁰ But it is more reasonable to infer that Hebrews was written to a community in which neither the continuing validity of the Mosaic Law nor ethnic difficulties were issues

⁹⁸ Richard Bauckham argues that the great majority of Christ-followers accepted the decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) and controversy ceased regarding whether Gentile converts had to follow the Law. However, the discussion about whether Christian Jews had to follow the Law continued. See "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 415-80. If one does not accept Bauckham's argument and thinks that the applicability of the Law to Gentiles continued to be contentious, then it is even more striking that those aspects of the Law that were points of controversy are never mentioned in Hebrews' extended argument that the institutions and regulations of the Law have reached their *telos* in Jesus. The argument of Hebrews is limited to priesthood, sacrifice, city and land.

⁹⁹ If Hebrews was written to Rome, then we must surmise that the ethnic problems Paul addresses in Romans were solved by the time Hebrews was written or that Hebrews was written to a small, isolated, fairly homogeneous group within the Roman church.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. E.F. Scott's statement: "There can be only one explanation of the silence observed in our Epistle.... Paul's victory was now complete, and in the church to which this letter was addressed, whether at Rome or elsewhere, the old barriers between Jew and Gentile had disappeared" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922], 19).

of practical concern at the time of writing. Furthermore, at one point the author's argument *may* even depend on the continuing validity of the Law: "Anyone who sets aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witness" (10:28).¹⁰¹ In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to suppose that the readers were Torah observant Christian Jews.¹⁰² (Obviously, Palestine is the most likely location to find such a group but this does not rule out a Diaspora location.)

It was argued above that we should approach Hebrews with a presumption in favor of reading it as a document of Second Temple Judaism rather than anachronistically reading it as a document of early Christianity. If this is done, then everything that we can deduce about the author and recipients of this epistle points to them being people who would have identified as Jews who would not have found their Jewish identity the least bit incompatible with their confession of Jesus—at least not until the situation arose that elicited the epistle.

Time for a New Take on an Old Perspective

This chapter has argued that the reason so little progress has been made over the course of the last century is not primarily evidentiary. More evidence would be

¹⁰¹ Hebrews 7:12 states that "when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well." If taken to apply to the entire Mosaic Law, then the author is probably trying to convince his readers that it has come to an end—implying that they are observant. Charles P. Anderson has argued that the entire Mosaic Law is not, however, in view here, only the regulations concerning sacrifice ("Who are the Heirs of the New Age in the Epistle to the Hebrews?" in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 268-71). He also suggests that it is a mistake to infer that the entire Law is replaced from the fact that Hebrews sees the old covenant replaced by the new. "While the Torah as a whole has not been replaced, only 'changed' in the sense that its parts dealing with sacrifice required re legislation, the same cannot be said about the covenant. This is partly due to the fact that there is only one Torah but two covenants. Further, covenant is not law, but the framework in which law has its significance" (272). Similar sentiments are expressed by Filson, *'Yesterday'*, 44.

¹⁰² Chapter Nine will argue that there is evidence in Hebrews that the recipients were concerned with the proper observance of sacrificial regulations. If that is correct, then it can be safely supposed that they followed most other aspects of the Mosaic Law as well.

welcome, but the impasse is created by a conceptual flaw. Scholarship on Hebrews is pervaded by grossly anachronistic assumptions about the Christ-movement and its relationship to Judaism in the first century C.E.. Hebrews is mistakenly read as a document of early Christianity, a movement with a Jewish "background" but already a religion distinct from Judaism. It is read in a "post-parting-of-the-ways way."

Scholars read these anachronisms into their interpretation of key pieces of evidence, resulting in distorted interpretations that prevent the evidence from leading us to the correct answers for the questions Hebrews challenges us with. Contrary to what many scholars see as obvious, Hebrews is *not* "an exercise in comparative religions" in which the author is "clearly" concerned to compare Christianity and Judaism.¹⁰³

Hebrews is a document of Second Temple Judaism; it should be interpreted as such. The riddle of Hebrews becomes tractable when it is.

The remaining chapters will reopen the discussion of Hebrews' destination and the situation it addresses. It was observed that despite the lack of new argumentation or evidence, broad consensus has emerged regarding Rome as Hebrews' probable destination. It was also noted that Hebrews has even come to be used as a primary datum in the history of Roman "Christianity." If this hypothesis is unsound, then it will be detrimental to our understandings of both Hebrews and the Christ-movement in first-century Rome. Yet, to date there has been no critical assessment of the Roman hypothesis. This is a situation crying out to be rectified. For this reason the next two chapters will reopen the discussion of Hebrews' background by describing the rise of the Roman hypothesis and evaluating its merits.

¹⁰³ William Klassen, "To the Hebrews or Against the Hebrews? Anti-Judaism and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. 2 *Separation and Polemic* (ed. Stephen G. Wilson; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 5.

In some ways the Roman hypothesis represents an advance over previous proposals. Nonetheless, it is wrong. Many of the arguments adduced in favor of a Roman destination are equally compatible with a Roman or Italian place of origination. Others are unsound. One of the most often cited pieces of evidence turns out actually to be firm evidence *against* a destination anywhere in Italy when properly evaluated. Furthermore, the social settings proposed on a Roman location for the recipients prove implausible. The Roman hypothesis should thus be set aside as an interesting, fruitful but ultimately failed chapter in the history of interpretation.

If the Roman hypothesis fails, then the issue of the epistle's destination is wide open, or at least should be. Given the *alttestamentliche* character of the epistle, it is natural to consider the possibility that Hebrews was written to a community in Palestine. After all, Palestine was the place where issues pertaining to sacrifice, sanctuary, purification and priesthood could most easily become issues of practical concern. Moreover, in light of the knowledge we have gained from the Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Jewish texts, we know that these were among the central issues dividing Jewish groups in Palestine during the Second Temple period.

Consider the following summary statement by Lawrence Schiffman.

It is essential for an understanding of the issues and developments in the Second Temple period to realize that Jewish law was at the heart of the manifold controversies which then beset Judaism. Basic issues regarding the Temple and its cult, the ritual calendar, ritual purity and impurity, and similar matters caused a part of the Jewish population of the Second Temple period to constitute themselves into what have come to be called 'sects.'¹⁰⁴

The early "Christians" were not insulated from the rest of Jewish society. We can be certain that they were aware of many of the disputed issues. Furthermore,

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Qumran and Rabbinic Halakhah," in *Jewish Civilization in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (ed. Shemaryahu Talmon; JSPSup 10; Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 139.

even though there is little evidence for the specific positions they took, there is a strong presumption in favor of believing that there were distinctively "Christian" positions on many of the common areas of dispute that were characteristically held by members of the Jesus-movement.

In this light, it does not seem accidental that several of the major foci of Hebrews' argument correlate to the major areas of ongoing dispute attested for Second Temple Palestine. It would seem that the intuitions that guided the interpretation of Hebrews for nineteen centuries and reaffirmed by the major critical commentators of a previous generation were not as naïve as many contemporary Hebrews specialists insinuate. But the current consensus of Hebrews scholarship is that a Palestinian location for the readers is implausible if not impossible.

A number of arguments are commonly rehearsed that are thought to rule out a Palestinian destination. Following the discussion of the Roman hypothesis, these arguments will be examined and found wanting. In the course of this we will see further illustration of the fact that on certain issues some Hebrews specialists seem unaware of important advances in other areas of NT scholarship. The fact is that no good arguments have been offered to date which rule out a Palestinian destination or even make one less likely than a destination in the Diaspora. We should thus give very serious consideration to the likelihood that our strangely "*alttestamentliche*" epistle was written to a community in Palestine to address a situation that had arisen among them that was in some way related to issues of sacrifice, sanctuary, purity and priesthood.

Arguments will be offered confirming this proposition based upon new exegetical insights that incorporate important new external evidence. These

arguments will allow us to be even more precise: Hebrews was written to Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 70 C.E.. This position was once the consensus view, but older articulations tended to be vague with regard to the specific situation that elicited the epistle. They also suffered from the common anachronistic assumptions about the Christ-movement and Second Temple Judaism that plague Hebrews scholarship to this day. But the new arguments that will be offered allow for a major component of the eliciting situation to be specified with a high degree of probability.

Without yet giving away all the details, my basic thesis is that Hebrews was written to some of the members of the Jesus-movement in Jerusalem to address a situation in which they were experiencing strong tension, for the first time, between their identity as Israelites and their identity as Christ-followers.¹⁰⁵ As Jews, their identity as Israelites and their commitments to the nation and its customs were primary and their identity as "Christians" was nested within them.¹⁰⁶ If resolution of the tension could not be achieved, they were on the path to abandoning their "Christian" confession. The author of Hebrews addresses this aspect of the situation and shows that their identity as Israelites should lead to firmer convictions about their confession of Jesus. He does this by demonstrating that all the institutions and customs of the nation find their divinely ordained fulfillment in Jesus. Furthermore, if there is a choice to be made between Jesus and their national institutions and customs, they should choose Jesus. Why? Because with his appearance the anticipated time of restoration and reformation has begun and the institutions and

¹⁰⁵ Although *identity* is a plastic term, I am confident that few will misunderstand my usage and thus I will not attempt to define it or present a model for the concept. Philip Esler feels that the term has "an alarmingly high coefficient of elasticity" (*Conflict and Identity*, 11) and therefore develops a model based on social identity theory (19-39). Without committing myself to all the particulars, I am generally sympathetic with the model Esler presents.

¹⁰⁶ For discussion of the idea of nested identities, see Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 49-50.

customs that have hitherto been central to Jewish national identity have reached their predetermined *telos* (9:6-10). A new age has dawned and the identity markers imposed by the Mosaic covenant until that age should arrive will soon pass away (8:13).

What might have generated this tension between identities? I believe Moule is close to the mark he states: "a very plausible setting may be found in the ardent Jewish nationalism which must have been kindled or enhanced by the opening of the Jewish war in A.D. 66." He thinks this is just the kind of crisis that "might put psychological, moral, and even physical pressure on Jewish Christians [sic] to relapse back into non-Christian Judaism" and make very good sense of Hebrews.¹⁰⁷ (Given Josephus' description of Palestine in the years immediately preceding the war, this kind of pressure could have been exerted even before the opening of hostilities.) This is an old position once widely held amongst critical scholars,¹⁰⁸ though today it is only rarely endorsed by scholars of standing.¹⁰⁹ Though Moule frames his position in the common anachronistic way, his main point is unaffected and should be given serious consideration. Hebrews makes very good sense if it is understood to have been written to a situation in which nationalistic sentiments had been stirred and pressure was being put on the recipients to give up their distinctive confession.

¹⁰⁷ C.F.D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (3rd ed.; London: A&C Black, 1981; repr. London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 98.

¹⁰⁸ Among twentieth-century scholars, the most prominent representatives are Alexander Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood: Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913); idem, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), lxxv-lxxvi; and George B. Caird, "Underestimated Theological Books: Alexander Nairne's 'The Epistle of Priesthood,'" *ExpTim* 72 (1960-61): 204-206. Nairne did not, however, locate the recipients in Judea. However, it is striking how little support the Jewish Revolt seems to have found in the Diaspora. If nationalism was an issue, Judea is the natural place to locate the readers.

¹⁰⁹ E.g., James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha & the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (2nd ed.; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 85-86.

Though an old position and no longer popular, I believe it is basically right—it just needs some adjustment and filling out.

The danger addressed in Hebrews is the possibility that the recipients might forsake their confession of Jesus, cease meeting with other Christ-followers and therefore leave the community. The author seeks to assure them of their confession and encourage them to persevere in it despite the present difficulties being experienced and those which they anticipate for the future. If the problem were mere laxity in faith or intellectual doubt about the confession, then there were numerous strategies open to the author to address the situation. One would not, however, expect his argument to focus on priesthood and sacrifice unless these issues were especially pertinent to the recipients' situation. And they were. The readers were located in Jerusalem and a situation had arisen that was forcing them to decide on a course of action that would entail giving up participation in the Temple cult. Their deep-seated intuitions as Jews and their Torah-inspired convictions made them hesitant to follow this course of action, fearing that to do so was contrary to God's will. This is not because they refused to "go all the way" with their Christianity since they were, in the words of Raymond Brown, a group "tilting toward an ultraconservative appreciation of the levitical cult."¹¹⁰ It was because they were simply Christ-following Jews for whom the institutions of the Torah were normative. The author, in turn, writes to them in order to demonstrate from Israel's scriptures that the course of action they were being called to was backed by both divine authority and the precedent of some of Israel's most prominent national heroes.

¹¹⁰ Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 158.

Thus, maintaining their confession of Jesus and following the course of action being deliberated would not run contrary to their mores as Israelites in spite of the *prima facie* appearance of doing so. To the contrary, following this course of action would be to follow in the footsteps of that great cloud of witnesses from Israel's past. The combination of new exegetical insight and new external evidence will allow us to identify the specific course of action they were deliberating. This will open the way to placing Hebrews within the history of the Jerusalem church and reading the entirety of Hebrews' argument in a more coherent fashion. Space will not prevent exploring these lines of inquiry in detail, but they will be briefly taken up in the last chapter.

Peter Walker accurately observes that there is no 'New Perspective' on Hebrews generating debate as there is on Paul.¹¹¹ But it is time that there was a new take on an old perspective.

¹¹¹ Walker, "A Place for Hebrews?" 231.

Chapter Three

The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of Rome

The Dissolution of a Consensus

Hebrews does not identify its recipients' location in the opening lines.

Neither are there any early church traditions about the epistle's destination.

However, for the first eighteen centuries of NT interpretation disagreement about the destination of Hebrews was all but unknown. Despite the absence of both internal statement and external tradition, it seemed clear that there was only one possible place to which it could have been sent: Jerusalem. As with many traditional positions, this was widely called into question when critical scholarship blossomed in the nineteenth century. A vast array of alternate destinations were proposed, but the highly speculative nature of these conjectures prevented most of them from attracting many proponents.¹

During the nineteenth century Alexandria was the most seriously considered alternative destination. Proponents contended that the author's dependence on the LXX, his fine Greek and possibly his description of the sanctuary were problematic for a Palestinian destination. It was felt that other locations in the Diaspora faced the more serious problem of being inadequate to explain the author's focus on the Levitical cult and the recipients' apparent participation in its services—features

¹ Asia Minor, Laodicea, Antioch, Cyprus, Syria, Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, Spain and Alexandria are all listed in Gottlieb Lünemann, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. M.J. Evans; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882), 41, 43. Others were also proposed.

usually cited in favor of the traditional view. Alexandria was an attractive location for several reasons. It was a hellenistic city in which the Greek language and use of the LXX would be expected. The Oniad temple in Leontopolis provided a place where the readers could have participated in a Levitical cultus. It would readily allow for the perceived similarities between Hebrews and Philo. Despite these and other perceived strengths, support for the position eventually dissipated.² Three reasons seem to have been most influential. First, we know very little about either the history of "Christianity" in Egypt or the relations between Christ-followers and the larger Jewish populace. Thus, any reconstruction of the situation is pure speculation. Second, parallels with Philo were not considered enough reason for locating the recipients there, even if one granted that the author could have been an Alexandrian. Third, it was thought that very few Jews, including "Christians," would have accepted the validity of the allegedly schismatic Oniad temple, though this is a questionable premise.³ Lastly, there seemed to be nothing in Hebrews that clearly

² For an overview of the chief arguments that were cited for and against Alexandria, see Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 43-51 or Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), 1885), 324-25.

³ The unargued assumption that the temple of Onias was schismatic and would have been considered illegitimate by most Jews continues to be made. For a recent example, see Jörg Frey, "Temple and Rival Temple—the Case of Elephantine, Mt. Gerizim, and Leontopolis," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple* (ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 171-203. This is not a warranted assumption. The legitimacy of sacrifices offered in this temple was disputed, at least after it was destroyed (cf. *m. Men.* 13.10). But it should be remembered that Onias built his temple in deliberate fulfillment of biblical prophecy (*Antiq.* 13.62-73), whatever other motivations may have been at work. The relevant verse states: "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border" (Isa 19:19). This seems to be located in "the city of the Sun" (19:18). Such explicit warrant for a temple in Egypt, specifically in the nome of Heliopolis (lit. "city of the sun"), would have given a lot of credibility to the Oniad temple and would have made its existence easy to reconcile with the Deuteronomic insistence on the exclusive sacrificial worship of YHWH in "the place" (Deut 12:11-14, etc.), i.e. Jerusalem. Interestingly, Josephus does not criticize the correlation between the Isaianic prophecy and the Oniad temple (*BJ* 7.432). Elsewhere he interprets the Deuteronomic prescriptions as applying specifically to the land of Canaan (*Antiq.* 4.199-201), something that anyone who accepted the validity of the Oniad temple could do (whether Josephus did or not). This would allow one to consider both the Oniad temple and the Temple in Jerusalem legitimate and complimentary, not as mutually exclusive rivals. The Mishnah discusses whether the fulfillment of certain sacrifices and vows are considered valid in the "House of Onias" while

pointed specifically to Alexandria. Thus, Alexandria proved to be a brief stopping point as the consensus of scholarship journeyed on to Rome.

Despite challenges to the traditional view, through the end of the nineteenth century the majority of critical commentaries continued to maintain that the argument and "feel" of Hebrews made sense only if it had been written to Jerusalem or elsewhere in Palestine. Moreover, this was maintained *in spite of* the fact that this was a traditional position. Most notable in this respect are the commentaries by Friedrich Bleek, Moses Stuart, Gottlieb Lünemann, Franz Delitzsch and B.F. Westcott.⁴ Each of these works are monuments to their authors' erudition and remain worth consulting. Bleek and Westcott should be especially highlighted. Bleek's three-volume commentary was a monumental work of the "*wissenschaftliche*" study of the New Testament. It secured for Bleek a reputation as a biblical scholar of the first rank and was widely seen as exemplifying the heights to which critical scholarship could attain. Referring to Bleek's commentary, "Every competent scholar," wrote Delitzsch, "will confirm the judgement of de Wette, that it is a work occupying one of the first places, if not the very first place, among the exegetical productions of our

others are reserved for Jerusalem. This may reflect earlier practice, indicating that the Oniad temple had come to be seen as a supplement to the Jerusalem Temple for certain functions and therefore not a rival to it. Furthermore, Jews from the land of Onias (as the area around the temple became known) served as border guards in Ptolemaic Egypt (*BJ* 1.175, 190; *Antiq.* 14.131). This assignment could have been requested by them in a conscious attempt to fulfill the second part of the biblical prophecy: "a pillar of the LORD at its border." Josephus indicates that on one occasion they allowed an army to pass in deference to the authority of the High Priest of the Jerusalem Temple (*BJ* 14.131-32). This would seem to presuppose that they did not consider the Oniad temple and its High Priest to replace the institutions in Jerusalem. Collins agrees that there is no evidence of schismatic intentions in the building of the Oniad temple (John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 72). But the fact that the Mishnah (followed by the Talmud) comments on the legality of sacrifices offered there in a general manner undermines his claim that it "can only have been the sanctuary of the local military colony" (p. 71).

⁴ Friedrich Bleek, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (3 vols.; Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1828, 1836, 1840); Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (3rd ed.; Andover, Mass.: Warren F. Draper, 1854); Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (2 vols; trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887); Lünemann, *Hebrews*; B.F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1892; reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

time."⁵ There is no better testimony to Bleek's scholarship than the fact that his commentary remained without peer for more than a century until the publication of Spicq's work in the early 1950s.⁶ Westcott's is noteworthy not just for erudition, but also for its rigor, judiciousness and conciseness. Though written near the end of the nineteenth century, one can still find scholars who consider Westcott to remain the greatest of Hebrews' Anglophone commentators.⁷ Westcott's commentary represents a highpoint in nineteenth-century biblical commenting. Published shortly before a new consensus formed and widely consulted by those advocating the new view, this work merits special attention. It is informative to learn why Westcott remained convinced of a Jerusalem destination and why he failed to persuade those who followed him in the next generation.

Westcott was convinced that unless another location could be firmly established, one should accept that Hebrews was written to Jerusalem or somewhere nearby.⁸ He examined several of the usual arguments against a Palestinian destination and determined that none posed a serious objection to locating the readers there.⁹ Decisive for Westcott was the fact that central to Hebrews are issues related to sacrifice, Levitical priesthood and eschatology and these are addressed as having practical bearing upon the readers' situation. Where except Palestine would it be natural to expect a situation to arise in which a Christian community might have practical concerns related to these three things? He acknowledged that a Diaspora

⁵ Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1.31.

⁶ C. Spicq, *L'Épître Aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952, 1953).

⁷ This sentiment is expressed by Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 177. They state this while demonstrating familiarity with the important commentaries by Harold Attridge and William Lane.

⁸ Westcott, *Hebrews*, xxxv-xlii.

⁹ Westcott, *Hebrews*, xxxix-xl.

destination was not beyond all doubt since it was conceivable that exceptional circumstances might possibly give rise to such concerns. But attempts to reconstruct such circumstances elsewhere were dismissed as pure conjecture. Westcott contended that a Palestinian location should be accepted because there are no factors that rule it out and, among all the proposed destinations, it "satisfies the conditions of the problem most simply."¹⁰

Despite their erudition and continuing status as standard works on the subject, Bleek, Delitzsch, Westcott and their nineteenth-century colleagues did not prove to have lasting influence on scholarly opinion about Hebrews' destination. Scholars eager to hold "progressive" positions found it inconceivable that the results of critical scholarship should concur with traditional inferences. It cannot be proven, but one suspects that this contributed more to the breakup of the centuries-long consensus concerning Hebrews' probable destination than any arguments against it. Published just a few years after Westcott's commentary, Adolf Jülicher's influential *Einleitung* illustrates both how quickly the winds of change could blow and how they accomplished their deed. Jülicher professed amazement about "the astounding fact that to this day the community of Jerusalem... is seriously considered as having been the recipient of Hebrews." According to him, "all the evidence we have speaks against this theory" and "only the force of tradition" could account for the otherwise inexplicable fact that scholars still advocated it.¹¹ Others portrayed it as a vestige of the disproved theory of Pauline authorship, despite the fact that many of its advocates were no more inclined toward Pauline authorship than the proponents of

¹⁰ Westcott, *Hebrews*, xli.

¹¹ Adolf Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Janet Penrose Ward; London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1904), 162.

other views. To the contrary, it was Friedrich Bleek's careful and wide-ranging arguments against the position that did the most to influence opinion away from Pauline authorship, all subsequent writers being indebted to him.¹² But by such rhetorical moves a Palestinian destination was portrayed as an option that only an uncritical person could seriously consider. No evidence against the position was adduced that had not been widely discussed throughout the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, such rhetoric proved influential. Soon few scholars were willing to follow the lead of the great nineteenth-century commentators on pain of being labeled uncritical traditionalists.

As the consensus regarding the location of Hebrews' original recipients dissolved in the run up to the turn of the century, one of the many alternate locations began to find a significant following: Rome. This was first tentatively proposed by J.J. Wetstein in 1752. Ironically, it was put forward as possible support for Pauline authorship.¹³ Over the next century a few scholars lent their endorsement to the view, but it was not taken very seriously by commentators.¹⁴ Moses Stuart, for

¹² Bleek, *Hebräer*, 273-92. In contrast to most commentaries from that period up through recent decades, Bleek judiciously addressed the issues of the epistle's language, audience, purpose and content before raising the question of authorship. But authorship nonetheless is the most extensively discussed of the introductory issues, taking up an astounding 158 pages of the first volume. The issues addressed before the question of authorship are covered in 82 pages and those after (date and canonicity) in 87—much smaller in comparison, but still quite thorough, the hallmark of Bleek's commentary.

¹³ J.J. Wetstein, *Η αὐτὴ Διαθήκη: Novum Testamentum graece* (2 vols; Amsterdam: Dommer, 1752). The entirety of Wetstein's proposal was stated thus: "*Si conjecturae locus est, existimaverim potius ad Judaeos, qui Romae degebant, & Christo nomen dederant scriptam suisse: quo admissio facile intelligimus, qui factum, tum ut Paulus, qui Roma quidem sed non Italia excedere jussus erat, brevi se rediturum speraret, tum ut Itali Romanos salutarerent, tum denique ut Clemens Romanus frequenter illa uteretur*" (2:386-87). According to several commentators Wetstein was the first to advance this hypothesis and he is the only proponent of the view cited by Bleek in 1828 (*Hebräer*, 1.51). Marie Isaacs says the view "has an ancient pedigree," giving no references in support (*Reading Hebrews & James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* [Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002], 9). She is almost certainly mistaken about this.

¹⁴ Holzmann and Baur are the only scholars identified as holding to a Roman destination by Friedrich Bleek, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ed. J.F. Bleek; trans. W. Orwick; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869-70), 2.125 n. 1. A few years later Lünemann listed Wetstein, R. Köstlin (who is also said to have changed his mind), Holzmann, Alford, Kurtz, Renan, Mangold and Harnack as favoring Rome

example, dismissed the hypothesis as pure conjecture.¹⁵ As late as 1878 Gottlieb Lünemann could quickly reject the hypothesis because, again ironically, it either assumed or was intended to support Pauline authorship.¹⁶ This was not true for Holtzmann since he cites Rome's refusal to acknowledge Pauline authorship as the strongest evidence in favor of locating the original recipients there.¹⁷ But others, following Wetstein, held the view because they thought it could bolster Pauline authorship. Regardless, the position began to be commonly formulated independent of concerns to establish Pauline authorship and quickly gained adherents. By the early decades of the twentieth century these included notable scholars as varied as Henry Alford, Edgar J. Goodspeed, Adolph Harnack, Heinrich Holtzmann, Adolf Jülicher, George Milligan, A.S. Peake, E.F. Scott, Hermann von Soden and Theodor Zahn.¹⁸

The one factor that most influenced early twentieth-century scholarly opinion in favor of Rome was the publication of Harnack's "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes" in the first issue of *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*. Harnack was not the first to offer arguments for the position beyond Wetstein's conjecture, nor was this

(*Hebrews*, 41). Lünemann and Bleek both note that Ewald favored non-Roman destination in Italy, suggesting perhaps Ravenna.

¹⁵ Stuart, *Hebrews*, 32.

¹⁶ Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 13, 43.

¹⁷ Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, 326; idem, "Hebräerbrief," in *Bibel-Lexicon* (ed. Daniel Schenkel; 5 vols.; Leipzig: F.A. Brodhaus, 1869), 2.627.

¹⁸ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (1861; repr., Chicago: Moody, 1958), vol. IV; Edgar J. Goodspeed, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937); idem, "First Clement Called Forth by Hebrews," *JBL* 30/2 (1911): 157-60; Adolph von Harnack, "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes," *ZNW* 1 (1900): 16-41; Holtzmann, *Einleitung*; idem, "Hebräerbrief;" Jülicher, *Introduction*; George Milligan, *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: With a Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899); A.S. Peake, *Hebrews* (The Century Bible; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902); E.F. Scott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1923); Hermann von Soden, *Books of the New Testament: Contributions to Early Christian Literature* (trans. J.R. Wilkinson; London: Williams & Norgate and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907); Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909; German original 1897-99).

the first occasion on which he indicated that this was his view.¹⁹ His argument focused on such things as the fact that Hebrews is first attested in a document sent from the Roman church (1 Clement), it includes a greeting sent by "those from Italy" 13:24, ἡγούμενοι is used in 13:7, 17, 24 and documents associated with the Roman church and clues about the community's situation that he thought fit a Roman context.²⁰ (The arguments will be described in greater detail and assessed in Chapter Four.) For the most part his arguments were not original. But by 1900 Harnack had earned an international reputation as both a church historian and New Testament scholar; he was the most celebrated scholar of the early Christian era alive.²¹ This ensured that *his* proposals were widely discussed and seriously considered. According to Schiele writing in 1905, this essay was responsible for a "new and vigorous impulse" in the critical examination of Hebrews.²²

Continuing the habit to reconstruct Hebrews' situation as part of an argument for a preferred authorship candidate, Harnack presented his mature arguments for a Roman destination as part of his case in favor of Priscilla being the epistle's principle writer. Many scholars were hesitant to endorse Priscilla's authorship but Harnack found a ready following for his arguments regarding destination.²³ This had the effect of giving those arguments the imprimatur of having passed through the fire of

¹⁹ Several of the *Einleitungen* and commentaries published from around 1880 onwards list Harnack as holding this view but without identifying their source.

²⁰ Cf. Harnack, "Probabilia," 19-23.

²¹ For a brief overview of Harnack's work and stature, see H.M. Rumscheidt, "Harnack, Adolf von," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (ed. Donald K. McKim; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998), 491-95; Martin Rumscheidt, ed., *Adolf von Harnack: Liberal Theology at Its Height* (London: Collins, 1988), 9-41. More extensive is G. Wayne Glick, *The Reality of Christianity: A Study of Adolf von Harnack as Historian and Theologian* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

²² Friedrich Michael Schiele, "Harnack's 'Probabilia' Concerning the Address and the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *AJT* 9 (1905): 290.

²³ Schiele, "Harnack's 'Probabilia,'" 290. Cf. Charles C. Torrey, "The Authorship and Character of the So-called 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *JBL* 30/2 (1911): 137.

ordeal. The combined weight of this imprimatur, Harnack's considerable reputation and the prestige quickly accorded the new journal resulted in the Roman hypothesis being perceived as a "scientific" position in contrast to the purely speculative nature of its competitors. Furthermore, the Roman hypothesis was not only advocated by liberal critics like Harnack, but also by influential conservative critics like Zahn (who had argued for the position a few years previous). It was thought by some that if scholars of such opposing tendencies reached the same conclusion, then this must be an instance of critical scholarship producing scientifically assured results. By 1910 enough scholars of standing had endorsed the view that Marcus Dods could confidently assert that "critical opinion has decidedly veered towards Rome as the only possible destination."²⁴

In the following decades scholars could still be found who believed that a Palestinian destination made the best sense. For example, in 1931 Turner could insist that Hebrews admirably fits "into known conditions of time and place, when the Christian community of Jerusalem had to face the issue squarely between the abandonment of their Christianity and the abandonment of their city." He followed this comment by sending a shot over the bow of scholarly trends away from this position: "Criticism which shuts its eyes to such patent historical probabilities stands self-condemned."²⁵ But the consensus was broken and the expression of sentiments like Turner's became infrequent. Out of obligation to the history of interpretation a Palestinian destination continued to be discussed in the *Einleitungen* but rarely

²⁴ Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in vol. IV of *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (ed. W. Robertson Nicoll; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897-1910; repr.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 233.

²⁵ Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, *Catholic and Apostolic* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1931), 81-82.

treated as a serious option. Various other destinations were proposed and sometimes entertained, but to little effect. Scholarly opinion continued to shift toward Rome.

Qumran Spring

Throughout the first-half of the twentieth century the Roman hypothesis continued to grow in popularity with little serious competition. Dods may have slightly overstated things in 1910, but approaching mid-century one could fairly speak of a consensus of critical scholarship on the issue. Then the Qumran scrolls were discovered and that consensus was challenged. Otto Michel was the first scholar to note parallels between Hebrews and the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1957 when he published a new edition of his already respected commentary.²⁶ But it was an essay by Yigael Yadin published the next year that breathed new life into the possibility that Hebrews was written to Palestine.²⁷ Yadin discussed a number of points at which Hebrews seemed to either parallel or respond to positions articulated in the Scrolls. These pertained to such things as the priestly and kingly messiahs, the eschatological role of angels, the Prophet of the end-time and Pentateuchal subject matter. Shortly thereafter other scholars published studies highlighting parallels between Hebrews and the Qumran texts that led to additional speculation about connections between the author or readers and the Qumran community. The most extensive of these was a monograph by the Swedish scholar Hans Kosmala in which

²⁶ Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13; 10th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), iii-iv, 377-78, 576-78. The primary enumeration of the KEK series is based on the first edition in the series (in this case the 1855 edition of Lünemann's commentary). This was actually the 4th edition of Michel's own commentary, the original having been published in 1936. This edition was apparently produced specifically because of the Qumran parallels; the 9th/3rd had appeared only two years prior.

²⁷ Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana* Vol. 4 (2nd ed.; ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1965; 1st ed. 1958]), 36-55.

he accused Yadin of stealing the basic idea from him.²⁸ When Jean Daniélou and Ceslaus Spicq published works also drawing connections between Hebrews and Qumran, the weight of their academic reputations was enough to throw the issue of Hebrews' destination wide open, even if they did not locate the readers in Judea proper.²⁹ (It should be recalled that Yadin was famous as a military commander but not yet as a scholar, having received his Ph.D. only three years previous.)

Proposals of this type varied widely in their details. Yadin believed that the addressees of Hebrews "must have been a group of Jews originally belonging to the DSS Sect who were converted to Christianity, carrying with them some of their previous beliefs."³⁰ Spicq and Daniélou tried to make the link more definite by suggesting that the recipients of Hebrews were converted priests (cf. Acts 6:7) who had associated with the Qumran community. Kosmala contended that the author of Hebrews was himself a former member of the Qumran sect; Hebrews was composed as an evangelistic treatise for other Qumranites (or at least Essenes) who were favorable toward Christianity but not yet converted. Somewhat later George Wesley Buchanan also drew many parallels between the Qumran community and Hebrews' addressees in a commentary marked by its idiosyncrasies. He did not, however,

²⁸ *Hebräer-Essener-Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (StPB 1; Leiden: Brill, 1959), vii-viii. Kosmala reports that he had conversed about the main idea of his monograph with David Flusser in May of 1957 and claims Yadin heard about it from Flusser. In the second edition of his essay Yadin inserted a note apparently meant to counter Kosmala's charge. It indicates that he had delivered a public lecture in March, 1957 in which he had discussed the main point of his essay—two months before the conversation between Kosmala and Flusser. As for Flusser, he also published an essay that noted parallels between Hebrews and Qumran texts at the same time as Yadin ("The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 215-266).

²⁹ Jean Daniélou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* (trans. S. Attanasio; Baltimore: Helicon, 1958), 111-13; C. Spicq, "L'Épître aux Hébreux, Apollos, Jean-Baptiste, Les Hellénistes et Qumran," *RevQ* 1/3 (1959): 365-90. Spicq thinks the readers were likely located at Caesarea or Antioch (*Hébreux*, 1.249-52).

³⁰ Yadin, "DSS and the Epistle to the Hebrews," 38.

believe the author or recipients were necessarily former Qumranites or Essenes.³¹

Rather he envisioned Hebrews as having been written to the members of a very strict, communal, monastic sect in Jerusalem whose rules and beliefs were very similar to those of the Qumran community. They had settled in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The views of Kosmala and Buchanan were quickly dismissed by most scholars. Three primary reasons account for this. First, though very different from one another in their details, both theories are highly speculative. Second, most scholars simply found it difficult to consider either theory a plausible interpretation when confronted with the details of Hebrews. Finally, in order for their elaborate theories to work Kosmala and Buchanan each had to label sections of Hebrews as interpolations.³² Yet, there is no text-critical evidence to support this.³³

In 1962 Joseph Coppens published the earliest detailed evaluation of the proposals of Yadin, Kosmala, Spicq, Daniélou and others that had by then appeared.³⁴ Coppens evaluated the cited parallels and was critical of those who drew close links between Hebrews and the teachings of Qumran on their basis. He argued that even the strongest points of contact could be explained by a common Jewish background. He also argued that more substantive parallels were to be found

³¹ George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (AB 36; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972).

³² Kosmala: 5:11b-14 and 6:6b; Buchanan: the entirety of chapter 13.

³³ On the text of Hebrews see Spicq, *Hébreux*, 412-32 and F.F. Bruce, "Textual Problems in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Scribes and Scripture* (ed. David Alan Black; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 27-39. One can also consult the more detailed but somewhat peculiar work by H.C. Hoskier, *A Commentary on the Various Readings in the Text of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Chester-Beatty Papyrus P⁴⁶* (circa 200 A.D.) (London: Bernard Quartich, 1938).

³⁴ Joseph Coppens, "Les affinités qumrâniennes de l'Épître aux Hébreux," *NRTh* 84 (1962): 128-41, 257-82. It was reissued later that year as a small book in the series *Analecta Lovaniensia Biblica et Orientalia*. For an overview of some of the other proposals that had been made, see Erich Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," *TRu* 30 (1964): 171-77; repr. in idem, *Aufbruch und Verheißung: Gesammelte Aufsätze Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 65; ed. Martin Evang and Otto Merk; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 34-40.

between Hebrews and Philonic Judaism. Coppens' evaluation was followed shortly thereafter by F.F. Bruce's essay "'To the Hebrews' or 'To the Essenes'?"³⁵ Bruce, writing without knowledge of Coppens' work, was likewise critical and inclined to place more weight on parallels with Hellenistic Judaism (in his case the theology of Stephen and the Hellenists rather than Philo). He answered the question posed in his title with, in effect, "To the Hellenists." He believed the evidence adduced from the Scrolls shed light on certain themes and phrases in Hebrews but did not warrant the conclusion that there were direct points of contact. Rather, all it demonstrated was that Hebrews was written to Christians who came from a background in "non-conformist Judaism." Following a suggestion by Matthew Black, Bruce argued that there was evidence for "non-conformist" forms of Judaism existing in the Diaspora as well as Palestine.³⁶ More specifically, he argued that a "non-conformist" strain with the appropriate characteristics (especially having to do with ablutions, see Heb 6:2) was represented in the Jewish community of first-century Rome and that some of these characteristics were carried over by converts into the Christian community.

Two years after Bruce's critique A.S. van der Woude published his now famous article on 11QMelchizedek.³⁷ Nearly as soon as it had come off the press Yadin wrote a brief article bringing Van der Woude's findings to bear upon his thesis.³⁸ He reminded readers that one of the main arguments in his earlier essay was his attempt to show that the author of Hebrews had tried to prove that Jesus

³⁵ F.F. Bruce, "'To the Hebrews' or 'To the Essenes'?" *NTS* 9 (1963): 217-32.

³⁶ Cf. Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins: Studies in the Jewish Background of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961; repr., BJS; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 101, 114-15; cf. 79.

³⁷ A.S. van der Woude, "Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI," *OTS* 14 (1965): 354-73.

³⁸ Yigael Yadin, "A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," *IEJ* 15 (1965): 152-54.

combined in his person the priestly and Davidic messiahs of Qumran. But how Melchizedek fit into this had remained unclear. With the publication of 11QMelchizedek Yadin had his answer: "since Melchizedek was considered to have had such a heavenly position, as well as an active role as an eschatological savior, in the Qumranite theology, the writer chose him deliberately, in order to convey more intimately and decisively his perception of Jesus' unique position."³⁹ So whatever challenges had thus far been presented, Yadin felt that his thesis was vindicated.⁴⁰ He did, however, state his thesis slightly more modestly: "the addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews were a group who held many of the Qumran Sect's beliefs."⁴¹

The pace of the discussion continued to be quick. In 1966 Herbert Braun published his detailed study of parallels between Qumran and the New Testament in which he was critical of those who postulated connections between Qumran and Hebrews.⁴² Soon after A.J.B. Higgins published an essay critical of claims that the high priestly Christology of Hebrews was in any way connected with Qumran.⁴³ In his opinion most of the similarities are superficial but the differences profound. A couple of years later F.C. Fensham published a survey and evaluation of the arguments linking Hebrews with Qumran.⁴⁴ He was critical of the arguments at several points. However, Fensham concluded that some connection could have

³⁹ Yadin, "Melchizedek and Qumran," 154. This aspect of Yadin's thesis continues to find expression in various modified forms, most recently by Anders Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus: 11Q Melchizedek and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila and Gladys S. Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 129-47.

⁴⁰ As for Van der Woude, he did not believe that the evidence was sufficient to conclude that Hebrews was directed towards members (or former members?) of the Qumran group. See his subsequent essay with M. de Jonge, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1966): 318, 322.

⁴¹ Yadin, "Melchizedek and Qumran," 153.

⁴² Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (2 vols.; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Siebeck], 1966), 1.241-78; 2.181-84.

⁴³ A.J.B. Higgins, "The Priestly Messiah," *NTS* 13 (1966-67): 231-36.

⁴⁴ F.C. Fensham, "Hebrews and Qumrân," *Neot* 5 (1971): 9-21.

existed between the Qumran community and Hebrews. He wrote that although one must be very cautious "it does seem nevertheless that the application of certain Old Testament citations, conceptions on ritual baths, the priestly Messiah and probably polemics against an erroneous conception of Melchizedek point in the direction of some affinity between Hebrews and Qumran."⁴⁵ How and where this contact took place were left open, though Fensham suggested Egypt as a possible point of contact (presumably with the Therapeutae in mind).

The decisive year for the revival of Palestinian hypotheses came in 1972. That year Buchanan published his commentary in the Anchor Bible series. After the suspicion cast upon such proposals by Kosmala's odd proposal, Buchanan's strained and speculative interpretations were sufficient to turn many scholars away from seriously considering a Palestinian destination.⁴⁶ That same year LaSor published his book on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament.⁴⁷ LaSor considered the possibility that Hebrews had been written to former members of the Qumran community and gave special attention to examining Yadin's thesis. LaSor admitted to finding Yadin's theory extremely attractive but felt it suffered from fundamental weaknesses.⁴⁸ His chief criticism was that Yadin had slanted his presentation in order to make parallels more obvious than they were if the texts were simply consulted side by side. This in turn led Yadin to read into Hebrews much more than

⁴⁵ Fensham, "Hebrews and Qumrân," 19.

⁴⁶ For example, in personal correspondence a few years ago Peter Walker indicated he was turned off from a Jerusalem destination for Hebrews after reading Buchanan even though it would bolster some of his arguments about the New Testament's theology of Jerusalem (cf. P.W.L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 201-34). More recently, however, he has stated: "A location for the audience in Jerusalem (or Palestine) is worth reconsideration" ("A Place for Hebrews? Contexts for a First-Century Sermon," in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting* [ed. P.J. Williams, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 246). Perhaps the effects of Buchanan's commentary are beginning to wear off.

⁴⁷ William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

⁴⁸ LaSor, *DSS and the NT*, 187.

he read out of it. He also accused Yadin of relying too heavily for his parallels on aspects of Qumran beliefs that were uncertain.⁴⁹ In the end he concluded that the details of Yadin's thesis "do not fit either the details of the argument of Hebrews or the details of Qumran eschatology at significant points. Whether the central points of the thesis... can be sustain by further rearrangement and realignment of the supporting arguments is not at present clear to me."⁵⁰ Other scholars were even less optimistic. That same year Batdorf's *Arbeitsbericht* opened by bluntly stating: "A short but valuable chapter in the history of exegesis has now come to an end. The brave hypotheses by which scholars hoped to establish some direct historical relation between the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Essenes of Qumran have been ambushed and driven from the field."⁵¹

For all practical purposes, Batdorf was correct. No other scholars ventured to propose connections between Hebrews and Qumran. But the suggestion that the recipients were former priests was sometimes endorsed and occasionally continues to find expression.⁵² And despite the phalanx of criticism, Yadin's thesis managed to attract some supporters in the following years. For example, in the last major commentary to advocate a Palestinian destination Philip Edgcumbe Hughes maintained that with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls "quite unexpectedly we have knowledge of an important movement in Palestine contemporary with the

⁴⁹ LaSor, *DSS and the NT*, 189-90.

⁵⁰ LaSor, *DSS and the NT*, 190.

⁵¹ Irvin W. Batdorf, "Hebrews and Qumran: Old Methods and New Directions," in *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich* (ed. E.H. Barth and R.E. Cocroft; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 16.

⁵² E.g., the introduction to Hebrews in the New Jerusalem Bible: "The letter's emphasis on ceremonial suggests that it was addressed to Jewish priests who hankered after the splendour of the Temple worship and its ineffectual sacrifices" (*The New Jerusalem Bible* [New York: American Bible Society, 1992], 1382). The introductory notes in the NJB are largely translations of those in the revised edition of *La Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris: Cerf, 1973); it is possible that the quoted comment was written by Spicq, Daniélou or one of their students.

composition of the Epistle to the Hebrews and showing close correspondences to the religious outlook which this epistle was designed to counteract."⁵³ He went on to argue that unlike other hypotheses "which have almost inevitably been imaginative and often fanciful attempts at reconstruction in the absence of materials for first laying a reasonably solid foundation," Yadin's hypothesis had the advantage of at least resting on "definite evidence concerning the beliefs and practices that were being advocated in contemporary Palestine and that have a close resemblance to the situation reflected in the Epistle to the Hebrews."⁵⁴ In the opinion of Hughes the case made by Yadin was "a strong one" though his own inclination was "to work with a wider stage."⁵⁵ Scholars like Richard Longenecker and E. Earle Ellis have continued to maintain the likelihood of a Palestinian destination at least in part because of Yadin's argument.⁵⁶

With the advantage of hindsight, after the dissipation of the Qumran spring L.D. Hurst re-examined the evidence and arguments on both sides in his important work on the conceptual background of Hebrews.⁵⁷ His study led him to conclude that "the enthusiasm which has been attached to the suggestions of Yadin and others which relate Hebrews directly to a Qumran background is less than well founded."

⁵³ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 15.

⁵⁴ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 15.

⁵⁵ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Eldon Jay Epp and George MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 352.

⁵⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 141-46; E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 285-88. Their positions should be distinguished from those of Kosmala and Buchanan. Of Kosmala's position, Longenecker states: he "has taken Yadin's thesis to an unwarranted extreme in claiming that the recipients of Hebrews were non-Christian Essenes" (*Biblical Exegesis*, 144). With respect to criticism, Ellis states of Bruce's that he "unfortunately draws back from the conclusions to which his own arguments point" (*Making*, 288 n. 269).

⁵⁷ L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 43-66.

More seriously, Hurst charged: "The suggestions involve a certain distortion of the argument of Hebrews, and in some cases the evidence of Qumran appears to have been misinterpreted. That many of the points adduced as parallel to Qumran are also parallel to Philo and other backgrounds makes it more likely that all the similarities are due to a common background—traditional exegesis of the OT."⁵⁸ However, it should be noted that even if the majority of the criticisms by Coppens, Bruce, Hurst and others are granted and a direct connection dismissed, it is nonetheless possible that the DSS may shed some light on the provenance of Hebrews. One could argue for something other than a direct point of contact. One possibility would be to see if the distinctive common themes and methods of exegesis found both in Hebrews and the Qumran literature were part of the common currency of Palestinian Judaism but *not* of Diaspora Judaism. Or, one could simply argue that some of the issues addressed in Hebrews which the DSS shed light upon were issues of particular concern in Palestinian Jewish society. Lastly, it should be observed that all the investigations discussed in this section took place prior to the full public release of the Scrolls. With the numerous advancements that have been made in our understanding of the Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism since their release, it may be time to reexamine Hebrews in their light. There may yet be material in the Scrolls that illumines our understanding of the epistle. Or, vice versa, Hebrews may illumine material in the Scrolls. But whatever the future may hold regarding these prospects, the fact is that the Qumran spring brought only brief respite for the idea that Hebrews was written to a community in Palestine. Moreover, the views of Kosmala and Buchanan appear to have cemented in the minds of many scholars the

⁵⁸ Hurst, *Background of Thought*, 65-66.

implausibility of a Palestinian destination and inadvertently helped to secure the consensus regarding Rome.

Bumps in the Road: Minority Views on Hebrews' Destination

Since the Qumran spring there has been little serious challenge to Rome's ascendancy to the position of consensus, merely a few bumps in the road on the way. For example, Robert Jewett has offered a creative reconstruction that has the letter being sent to the Lycus valley.⁵⁹ John Dunnill sees Hebrews as a general encyclical written to the churches of Asia Minor.⁶⁰ August Strobel suggests the epistle was written to a community in the Near East, perhaps Ephesus or Corinth.⁶¹ Ruth Hoppin takes the view that the letter was written to the leaders of the Ephesian church who were former Essenes from Qumran.⁶² The only proposal for a location other than Rome to generate any discussion has been F. Lo Bue's hypothesis that Hebrews was written to the Christian community at Corinth.⁶³

Hugh Montefiore accepted and expanded Lo Bue's hypothesis in a commentary.⁶⁴ Montefiore claimed to find thirteen points of contact between Hebrews and 1 Corinthians that suggest the letters were addressed to related historical situations. Most of these points of contact are drawn from 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Hebrews 5,6 and 13. Montefiore conjectured that Hebrews was written to

⁵⁹ Robert Jewett, *A Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Pilgrim, 1981), 5-13.

⁶⁰ John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTS 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 22-24.

⁶¹ August Strobel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Übersetzt und erklärt* (NTD 9/2; 4th ed.; Göttingen and Zurich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991; 1st ed. 1975), 13, 185.

⁶² Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fort Bragg, Calif.: Lost Coast Press, 2000).

⁶³ F. Lo Bue, "The Historical Background of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 75 (1956): 52-57.

⁶⁴ Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 9-31.

Corinth from Ephesus by Apollos as a response to Jewish troublemakers who were splitting the Corinthian community into Pauline and Apollonian factions (cf. 1 Cor 3:4-23). The reference to "those from Italy" (13:24) is explained as a reference to Priscilla and Aquila, natives of Italy who had been prominent in the Corinthian church.

F.F. Bruce described Montefiore's elaborate reconstruction of the events surrounding the writing of Hebrews and Paul's Corinthians letters as "an unusually fascinating and carefully argued case" and "ingeniously constructed." Though in the end not convinced, Bruce stated that "it is surprising to realize how many points can be adduced in its support."⁶⁵ However, when L.D. Hurst subjected the theory to a point by point critical evaluation he found that most of the alleged correspondences "tend to vanish upon scrutiny" and that "many of the points seem more clever than convincing."⁶⁶ He also noted that at least five of the alleged points of correspondence would require a direct literary relationship between 1 Corinthians and Hebrews. Yet, there is no evidence supporting such an extensive literary dependence between the two writings. Moreover, Paul's silence regarding a letter from Apollos is astounding given Montefiore's reconstruction of events. Following John A.T. Robinson, Hurst points out that Montefiore's thesis allows for an extremely short amount of time for a great many things to have occurred. Not the least of the difficulties this poses is that it may provide "too brief a time for an author to say reasonably that his readers should already 'be teachers' (Heb. 5.12)."⁶⁷ Since Hurst's critique no one has come

⁶⁵ F.F. Bruce, "Recent Contributions to the Understanding of Hebrews," *ExpTim* 80 (1969): 261.

⁶⁶ L.D. Hurst, "Apollos, Hebrews, and Corinth: Bishop Montefiore's Theory Examined," *SJT* 38 (1985): 512.

⁶⁷ Hurst, "Apollos, Hebrews, and Corinth," 513.

forth to champion the thesis. In addition to Hurst's criticisms, it should also be noted that Montefiore's entire reconstruction of the situation and choice of destination are designed to establish Apollos as the author. He presents a classic example of the tendency to begin with a favored candidate for authorship and read the evidence for other aspects of the epistle's background through that grid.

The Hegemony of Rome Established

In William Manson's 1949 Baird Lecture he sought to provide a "fresh integration of Hebrews into the historical development of Early Christian thought and life."⁶⁸ The two main components of his reconstruction were (1) linking Hebrews with the "world-mission" theology of Stephen and the Hellenists and (2) inquiring into the character of the Christ-community in Rome and that segment of the community to which Hebrews was written. The "sin" of the addressees "was not that of abandoning Christianity for Judaism, but rather remaining as Christians under the covert [sic] of the Jewish religion, living too much in the Jewish part of their Christianity, and so missing the true horizon of the eschatological calling."⁶⁹ He believed that most of the Christian community in Rome had accepted the more "liberal" thinking represented by Stephen and the Hellenists with regard to taking the gospel message to Gentile nations. The recipients, however, were a small conservative enclave that asserted principles similar to those of the "Hebrews" in the Jerusalem church. Hebrews was written to counter these claims and demonstrate that with the coming of Christ all past religious history, the Law and the cultus were

⁶⁸ William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (Greenwich, Conn.: Greenwich, n.d. [1951]), 23.

⁶⁹ Manson, *Reconsideration*, 24.

thrown "into the shadow," therefore "leaving no place in Christianity for Jewish-Christian archaizing."⁷⁰ The recipients were naturally conservative, but external persecution was also motivating their position. Thus, they were a group leery of an "open profession of Christianity" and inclining in various ways to draw "within the protection of the *religio licita* of Judaism."⁷¹ He dated this situation after the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 49 C.E. and prior to Nero's persecution of Christians, settling for a date around 60 C.E..⁷²

A brief sketch cannot do justice to Manson's reconstruction or the accomplishment it represents. For the first time someone attempted to root Hebrews into the known history of the Christ-movement and situate it in a definite social context. His descriptions of the social dynamics within the community and the community's relations with outsiders lack the theoretical sophistication of modern social-scientific analyses. By modern standards his work might sometimes look amateurish, but he was clearly anticipating some of the basic goals of social-scientific criticism. Though they often disagreed with minor aspects, many scholars found Manson's general portrait refreshingly plausible in comparison with the many reconstructions designed primarily to show that some named NT personality was the likely author.

Manson's study was published at an opportune time. Though the first Scrolls had been discovered a few years previous, no one had yet drawn connections between them and Hebrews. Manson's book can thus be viewed as the culmination of the Roman hypothesis' steady rise to consensus that had begun near the turn of the

⁷⁰ Manson, *Reconsideration*, 24.

⁷¹ Manson, *Reconsideration*, 151, cf. 164.

⁷² Manson, *Reconsideration*, 162-67.

century. But Manson went further in his reconstruction than did other scholars who adopted a Roman destination. Published only a few years before Yadin's essay, Manson's work was able to circulate and gain adherents before the hegemony of the Roman hypothesis was challenge. When it finally was, some who were working on Hebrews found Manson's attempt to situate the epistle more plausible than the various speculative attempts to connect Hebrews with the Qumran community. It is not accidental that F.F. Bruce, for example, was both one of the first critics of Qumran theories and an ardent advocate of Manson's thesis.

Manson's reconstruction exerted an acknowledged influence on Bruce's commentary as well as on the more recent commentary by William Lane, one of the more significant published since Spicq's.⁷³ Other scholars accepted the arguments in favor of a Roman destination but chose to reconstruct the situation differently than did Manson, Bruce or Lane or leave it unspecified. In addition to Bruce and Lane, recent scholars who can be said to advocate some version of the Roman hypothesis include Raymond Brown, Donald Guthrie, Thomas Hewitt and John A.T. Robinson.⁷⁴ In popular format it was promoted with confidence by William Barclay.⁷⁵ In addition to the commentaries by authors cited above, with varying degrees of confidence a

⁷³ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols., WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991). Cf. Bruce, "Hebrews: A Document of Roman Christianity?" *ANRW* II.25: 3496-3521; Lane, *Call to Commitment: Responding to the Message of Hebrews* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1985); idem, "Hebrews," *DLNT*, 443-58 and William L. Lane and Robert W. Wall, "Polemic in Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 166-98.

⁷⁴ Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983) [Brown wrote the chapter on Hebrews]; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990); idem, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1960); John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976), 206-214.

⁷⁵ William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (The Daily Study Bible; rev. ed.; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1976 [original 1955]). Other popular-level works on Hebrews adopt the Roman hypothesis as well, e.g. C.R. Hume, *Reading Through Hebrews* (London: SCM, 1997).

Roman location for the recipients of Hebrews has been accepted as probable in the commentaries by (among others) Harold Attridge, Gareth Cockerill, Fred Craddock, Paul Ellingworth, George Guthrie, Donald Hagner, Craig Koester, Leon Morris, Victor Pfitzner, Ronald Williamson, R. McL. Wilson and Hans-Friedrich Weiss.⁷⁶ Several recent monographs adopt it as a working hypothesis.⁷⁷ It is promoted in three book-length introductions to the study of Hebrews.⁷⁸ Several widely used New Testament introductions consider it the strongest of the alternatives.⁷⁹ Finally, the

⁷⁶ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989); Fred B. Craddock, "The Letter to the Hebrews," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 12.1-173; Gareth L. Cockerill, *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); Donald Hagner, *Hebrews* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990); Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001); Leon Morris, *Hebrews* (in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* 12; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981); Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997); R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); Ronald Williamson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Epworth, 1964); Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991). Robert P. Gordon does not discuss the location of the recipients in the introduction to his commentary but in the last sentence of the work he says that 13:24 probably indicates that it was written to Rome (*Hebrews* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 175.) In an earlier essay he says that Manson's thesis "provides an historical context more agreeable to the content of Hebrews than any other of which I am aware" ("Better Promises: Two Passages in Hebrews Against the Background of the Old Testament Cultus," in *Templum Amicitiae* [ed. William Horbury; JSNTSup 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991], 437).

⁷⁷ E.g., Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (SBLDS 156; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); Darrell J. Pursiful, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993); Mathias Rissi, *Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs: Ihre Verankerung in der Situation des Verfassers und seiner Leser* (WUNT 41; Tübingen: Mohr, 1987); Iutisone Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews: The Construction and Maintenance of a Symbolic Universe* (JSNTSup 219; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). This is also the view adopted in important works that address Hebrews but are not exclusively devoted to the book, e.g., Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 110-27.

⁷⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Andrew H. Trotter, *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews* (GNTE; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).

⁷⁹ In addition to the introductions by Brown and Guthrie above, see Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986); Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Werner George Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; trans. Howard Clark Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975); François Vouga, "L'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Introduction au Nouveau Testament: Son histoire, son écriture, sa théologie* (ed. Daniel Marguerat; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000), 329-41. Oddly, Rome is not even listed among the proposed destinations in Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Writings of the*

introductory articles on Hebrews in several important reference works of recent vintage are all written by proponents of the Roman hypothesis.⁸⁰ In contrast, during the last twenty years no significant commentary has advocated a different destination. Among commentators the only dissent has been the occasional expression of agnosticism or avoidance of the destination question altogether.⁸¹ David deSilva is perhaps as bold as any recent commentator has been when he expresses uncertainty about some of the arguments advanced in favor of the hypothesis and observes that the connection between Hebrews and Roman Christianity could possibly be on the part of the author rather than recipients.⁸² The last significant commentaries advocating locations for the recipients other than Rome were those by Buchanan, Hughes and Jewett—each of which were published more than twenty years ago.⁸³

It is now widely agreed that Hebrews was written for a community in Rome. Some scholars affirm this with confidence. Others are more tentative and accept it as only a working hypothesis or a likely proposition. Dissent from this view is rare.

New Testament: An Introduction (rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 458. This is odd, particularly since Johnson is reported to be writing a commentary on Hebrews.

⁸⁰ E.g., the articles on Hebrews in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (rev.), the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, and the *Dictionary of the Latter New Testament and Its Developments* were written (respectively) by Donald Guthrie, Harold Attridge and William Lane.

⁸¹ E.g., Samuel Benetreau, *L'épître aux Hébreux* (CEB 10; Vaux-sur-Seine: Édifac, 1989, 1990); Herbert Braun, *An Die Hebräer* (HNT 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Siebeck], 1984); Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (3 vols.; EKK; Zurich: Benziger and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990, 1993, 1997); Isaacs, *Hebrews & James*; Tom Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2003). Elsewhere Isaacs appears favorable to Spicq's suggestion of Caesarea or Antioch without committing herself to it. See Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 45.

⁸² David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 21-22. DeSilva's suggestion would be compatible with any location other than Rome. However, even though he never indicates a preference for any specific destination, he appears skeptical about Palestine.

⁸³ Also see Strobel, *Hebräer* who suggests an alternate view more than advocate one. The first edition of his commentary was also published more than two decades ago, though a new edition was released as recently as 1991.

Caution should always be urged about describing particular positions as enjoying the consensus of scholarship. Often such assertions are overstated and sometimes scholars gerrymander the borders of scholarship to ensure that the "consensus" happens to agree with their own positions. But in this instance it is accurate to say that there is consensus regarding Rome as the location of Hebrews' original recipients.⁸⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has overviewed the dissolution of scholarly consensus regarding Jerusalem as the destination of Hebrews and the formation of consensus regarding the Roman hypothesis. It highlighted four things: (1) the status that the old consensus held within critical scholarship near the end of the nineteenth century, (2) how quickly scholarly opinion shifted toward Rome, (3) why the Roman hypothesis was able to solidify its hegemony in the face of new Palestinian proposals following the Dead Sea discoveries, and (4) the breadth the current consensus enjoys within contemporary Hebrews scholarship. Influential scholars past and present are unified in proclaiming a Palestinian destination as indefensible and a Roman destination as probable. Dissent from this has become rare. But the next two chapters will examine the arguments cited in favor of Rome and against Palestine and show that both sets of arguments are weak. They are so weak that most of them would be dismissed out of hand if were not for the fact that so many who write on Hebrews continue to cite them as persuasive. Once the weakness of these arguments has been recognized we

⁸⁴ Ellen Bradshaw Aitken also describes this position as enjoying broad consensus in "Portraying the Temple in Stone and Text: The Arch of Titus and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Religious Texts and Material Contexts* (ed. Jacob Neusner and James F. Strange; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2001), 77.

will be forced to consider whether the dissolution of the classical consensus and its replacement did not have more to do with the sociology of the academy than with critical argumentation.

Chapter Four

Hebrews and Rome: A Consensus Without Foundations

Introduction

Approaching the end of the nineteenth century the consensus of critical scholarship agreed with the traditional inference about the location of Hebrews' original audience. Contrary to the rhetoric of some dissenters, this was not the product of uncritical traditionalism. Rather, close analysis of the text and evaluation of historical probabilities led the most eminent of Hebrews' commentators to believe that the only plausible position to hold was that the epistle had been sent to Jerusalem or elsewhere in Palestine. They reached this conclusion in spite of the fact that it concurred with the traditional view. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the classic consensus began to dissolve while an alternative was rising to dominance among biblical scholars.

During the last hundred and twenty five years an impressive array of scholars have endorsed some version of the Roman hypothesis. Despite challenges to the hegemony of the position after the Qumran finds, the majority of contemporary Hebrews specialists consider it likely that Hebrews was written to Rome. A few scholars even consider the hypothesis so probable that they include Hebrews among the primary data of Roman "Christianity."¹

¹ Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 139-58; William L. Lane, "Social Perspectives on Roman Christianity during the Formative Years from Nero to

Dissent from this consensus is infrequent and there are currently no significant rival positions. Criticism of the Roman hypothesis has been surprisingly rare and consistently unexacting.² One might be tempted to think that a position so widely held must be correct. That would be to confuse the extent of a position's popularity with the strength of its epistemic justification. Unfortunately, biblical scholars can be susceptible to this fallacy, a fact illustrated by recent writers who promote the Roman hypothesis with ever-increasing confidence. The Roman hypothesis should not be treated as probable with the confidence some express until it has been subjected to critical scrutiny. The most obvious reason for this is the influence the destination question has on our understanding of Hebrews, whether for good or bad. But it is also important that the hypothesis be rigorously tested for viability because Hebrews has been counted a primary datum in recent investigations into the history of "Christianity" in first-century Rome. If it turns out that Hebrews was not written to Rome, then its inclusion in such studies can only have a distorting effect. It is therefore important to assess the Roman hypothesis and the various arguments cited in its favor.

Nerva: Romans, Hebrews, 1 Clement," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 196-244; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (trans. Michael Steinhauser; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 76-78, 80 n. 1.

² C. Spicq, *L'Épître Aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 1:232-34; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 17-18; Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 18; Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 31-37.

The Deepening Anachronism of the Hypothesis

Some proponents of the Roman hypothesis follow the main lines of Manson's proposal in their reconstructions of the situation Hebrews addresses. Others diverge in various ways. Perhaps the component that receives the least support is the straight line of development that Manson saw leading from the theology of Stephen and the Hellenists to Hebrews.³ Most proponents date Hebrews in the 60's during the reign of Nero but Brown dates it between 75-90 C.E.. This leads scholars to correlate the persecution mentioned in Hebrews to different events in the history of Rome. Manson had denied that the readers were on the verge of returning to Judaism, but central to his thesis was the idea that they were taking cover under Judaism's status as *religio licita*. This ambiguity allowed for two interpretations. Most of the hypothesis' advocates follow Bruce in postulating that the readers were tempted to "return to Judaism" in the face of persecution for their faith because it was a legal "religion" (*religio licita*) whereas Christianity was not.⁴ Those who do not parse

³ This aspect of Manson's proposal, accepted by Bruce, depends on seeing the "Hellenists" and "Hebrews" of Acts 6:1-8:4 as ideologically distinct parties. This has been challenged by Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). Even if one does not agree with Hill that there was *no* division, the simple equation of the "Hebrews" with conservatives and "Hellenists" with liberals cannot be sustained. The Hellenist community in Jerusalem were Greek-speaking Jews who had moved to Jerusalem. They were the ones who instigated action against Stephen (Acts 6:9-14). Saul also disputed with them upon his return to Jerusalem after his conversion, apparently because Saul was one of them (Acts 9:29). Those who later caused trouble for Paul in Galatia, Beroea (Acts 17:13) and at the Temple (21:27) were Hellenists who seem to have been particularly antithetical to Paul's mission to the Gentiles, suggesting a conservatism that Paul's message upset. Why presume that the attitudes of Christ-followers among the Hellenists would be uniformly the opposite of the non-Christian Hellenist population? If there was an ideological division within the Jerusalem church, we should not expect for the Hebrews to have been generally more conservative than the Hellenists. After all, the Hellenists were the ones who had gone to the greatest lengths to express their piety by moving to Jerusalem to be near the Temple (cf. Luke's description of them as "devout men from every nation" in Acts 2:5).

⁴ As far as I know there is no evidence that *religio licita* was a formal category of Roman law and it certainly did not refer to a "legal religion." The phrase itself seems to be first attested in Tertullian, long post-dating Hebrews, though not as a technical legal term (*Apol.* 21.1). Jews had distinctive rights within the Empire that were periodically reaffirmed by various Caesars who decreed official toleration of specific Jewish practices: circumcision, keeping Sabbath, the right to gather in synagogue and payment of the Temple tax. In that sense distinctive Jewish practices were "*religio licita*" — tolerated religious

the situation out slightly differently. Rather than urging his readers not to "go back" to Judaism, the author is urging them to appreciate the full significance of their Christian faith and sever their continuing social and emotional ties with the Jewish community.⁵

Chapter Two argued that the conceptual flaw attending most investigations of the background of Hebrews was an anachronistic understanding of Judaism and "Christianity." Both of these versions of the Roman hypothesis exemplify this anachronism. One might expect that anachronism would be less extensive in more recent presentations of the Roman hypothesis. Such is not the case. The lengthiest and most recent version of the hypothesis is also its most anachronistic. If this is at all indicative of the direction Hebrews scholarship is heading it does not bode well for the investigation of the epistle.

Iutisone Salevao's recent monograph *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews* utilizes social-scientific methodologies in an attempt to show that the theology of Hebrews was "designed to explain, justify and sanctify the situation of the community of readers."⁶ Salevao places the readers in a house church in Rome sometime between 70-96 C.E.. They were experiencing political persecution, social alienation and hostility from pagan outsiders.⁷ There was also internal disunity caused by an internal power struggle and theological conflict that manifested itself in

scruples. But any Christian Jew (i.e. the majority of Christ-followers in the first-century) would have had these same rights. If a Roman official wanted to ascertain whether someone had these rights, he would not ask for a profession of faith but determine whether he/she was a Judean by birth or by observation of the national customs. If there was any doubt on the part of an official, Jewish men could easily settle the matter: no foreskin, no problem.

⁵ E.g., William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols., WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991), 545-46; Brown, *Antioch & Rome*, 156.

⁶ Iutisone Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews: The Construction and Maintenance of a Symbolic Universe* (JSNTSup 219; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 69.

⁷ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 133, 137.

the separation of some members from the group.⁸ The root problem causing disunity was the issue of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.⁹ The combination of these external and internal pressures made it difficult for some to remain within the Christian symbolic universe as originally constructed and therefore they were on the verge of "relapsing" into Judaism. Salevao defends the relapse theory at length.¹⁰ Amazingly, he seems to think that it is proven if he can merely show that it is unlikely the readers were predominantly Gentiles.¹¹

Salevao elaborates this socio-historical situation by arguing that the community was a sect that had long been separated and independent from Judaism. This is set within a discussion of the parting of the ways. According to Salevao Hebrews was not a transition stage in the parting of the ways but a "methodical, calculated attempt to legitimate the identity of Christianity... as a religious and social entity independent of and separate from Judaism."¹² This had to be done because the community could not tolerate dual allegiance to Christianity and Judaism, two religions with an "essential distinction."¹³ How does he know this? The community is a sect and sect theory tells us this is the way sects operate (a fallaciously circular use of a sociological model).¹⁴ This fits in with his belief that early Christ-followers took the name "Christian" upon themselves in a calculated move to distinguish Christianity from Judaism (based on a misreading of Acts 11:26).¹⁵

⁸ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 133, 331-32. Hebrews 13:9 is cited as evidence for this conflict (142) though I fail to see how this verse gives evidence of an internal power struggle.

⁹ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 144.

¹⁰ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 109-114.

¹¹ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 115-18.

¹² Salevao, *Legitimation*, 194.

¹³ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 218.

¹⁴ Cf. Salevao, *Legitimation*, 216.

¹⁵ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 179.

The fact that Hebrews never once mentions Judaism or Christianity nor even speaks of Jews or Christians is not found problematic. Salevao attempts to clarify the nature of the confrontation between early Christianity and Judaism and show how the language of superiority and perfection was used in Hebrews to legitimate Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism, dramatically illustrating the anachronistic approach to the epistle discussed in Chapter Two. As Salevao construes the various contrasts made in Hebrews they are all ways of demonstrating the superiority of Christianity and the inferiority of Judaism.¹⁶ The symbolic universe of Hebrews' community had become problematic because of the challenge of Judaism's competing universe, therefore the author "designed the superiority of Christianity/inferiority of Judaism dialectic to serve a nihilatory function."¹⁷ This means that the author sought to conceptually "liquidate" the entirety of the Jewish symbolic universe for his readers because they "simply refused to make a total break with Judaism."¹⁸ While Hebrews did not set out to directly confront Judaism, a strong anti-Jewish polemic was nonetheless necessary in order to legitimate Christianity.¹⁹

In many ways Salevao's study is the kind of social-scientific investigation that makes the methodology suspect in the minds of some biblical scholars. Salevao employs sociological models designed to explain certain phenomena. Repeatedly these phenomena are baldly asserted to be present in Hebrews (albeit usually introduced with "It is argued..."). He then proceeds to explain Hebrews in terms of the models. Besides being fallacious, these sociological explanations usually consist

¹⁶ Cf. Salevao, *Legitimation*, 113-14.

¹⁷ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 343, 383.

¹⁸ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 144.

¹⁹ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 218.

of broad, ambiguous assertions that are uniformly unenlightening and sometimes sociologically implausible. For example, is it plausible to think that anyone in the city of Rome suffering from social hostility and exclusion would be tempted to "go back" to Judaism after 70 C.E. when anti-Jewish sentiment ran high, the Flavians were minting coins and building monuments commemorating their defeat and humiliation of Judea, a large proportion of city's Jews were the enslaved spoils of war while the rest tended to live in the poorest parts of the city and the Jewish population throughout the empire was required to pay the *fiscus Judaicus*—a tax that was significantly more burdensome for most families than the previous Temple tax?²⁰ Not even remotely. If Christ-followers could be distinguished from the broader Jewish populace during this period, then the stigma of being Jewish provided more than enough motive for them to identify as non-Jews. They would not have shared the right to circumcise, keep the Sabbath and pay the *fiscus Judaicus*, but in this they would have been no different than those who participated in the host of oriental cults that flourished in Rome despite occasional measures to curb them.

The greatest shortcoming is Salevao's failure to understand Second Temple Judaism and the early Christ-movement's place in it. Numerous times features of Hebrews are cited as evidence that the community had consciously separated from Judaism and that the author was engaged in deliberate anti-Jewish polemics. Almost every one of these features is paralleled in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Jewish literature; they can hardly be evidence for a rejection of Judaism. Furthermore, Salevao fundamentally misunderstands the parting of the ways

²⁰ On how the *fiscus Judaicus* increased the burden of taxation for Jewish families, see E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 371-78.

metaphor and what it is meant to convey. For Salevao it refers to Christianity's deliberate secession from Judaism, Judaism's intentional rejection of Christianity and the religions' mutual denunciations of one another—all before the end of the first century. Salevao equates rabbinic Judaism with Judaism and assumes it existed in the first century and simply continued after the Temple's destruction.²¹ This is precisely the kind of erroneous and anachronistic construct that the parting of the ways model is intended to correct!

Salevao's reconstruction is riddled with many other problems that need not detain us here. For our purposes it is sufficient to note two things. First, the way he conceptualizes Judaism and Christianity in the first-century is grossly anachronistic. This in turn distorts his interpretation of many aspects of Hebrews, not the least of which is the disturbing way he reads the contrasts between the new covenant and the institutions of the old covenant. For him this is a contrast between Judaism and Christianity intended to denigrate Judaism. He even goes so far as to say that the superiority/inferiority construct of Hebrews should be rejected because it "has the power to breed 'a superior race' of Christians" that "conjure up images of the type of social consciousness which gave birth to the Third Reich"!²² This inference is extreme and would not be made by others who approach Hebrews with similar assumptions about the nature of the first-century Christ-movement and its place in Second Temple Judaism. But Salevao's extreme and fallacious inference serves to illustrate the extent to which interpretation can be distorted by an anachronistic view of ancient "Christianity" and Judaism. Second, Salevao's study exemplifies the insular character

²¹ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 187.

²² Salevao, *Legitimation*, 412.

of much contemporary scholarship on Hebrews. Many of his mistaken assertions and erroneous inferences would have been avoided by reading more widely in literature not specifically devoted to Hebrews or the social sciences. While Salevao attempts to utilize recent social-scientific research on the New Testament, his failure to keep abreast of some of the major advances that have been made in our understanding of Second Temple Judaism ensures that his study does nothing to advance our understanding of Hebrews. To the contrary, his conclusions are entirely regressive. Again, Salevao is an extreme case, but that extremity serves to expose the danger that faces all specialists who remain insulated within the two worlds of Hebrews scholarship and their preferred methodology, whether that be social-scientific criticism, discourse analysis, rhetorical criticism, theological analysis or some other preference.

Arguments for Locating the Recipients in Rome

In both its classic and most recent forms the Roman hypothesis is built upon an anachronistic understanding of Second Temple Judaism and the place of the Jesus-movement within it. Further criticisms could also be made regarding the plausibility of the social situations that proponents of the hypothesis have proposed. But neither this anachronism nor the implausibility of some of the social settings disprove the proposition that Hebrews was written to a community in Rome. It is possible that there is good reason to believe that Hebrews was written to Rome but that scholars have done a poor job reconstructing the situation the epistle addresses. Nine arguments of unequal strength are commonly cited in support of locating the

recipients in Rome. Before a final verdict can be reached about the Roman

hypothesis these arguments must be assessed. They can be summarized as follows:²³

- 1) The greeting of 13:24b sent on behalf of "the ones from Italy" (ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας) is most naturally understood as a greeting from expatriates being sent home. Italy is thought to be a referent for Rome because (a) Rome was the most important city in Italy, (b) we know that a Christian congregation was established there from early on, and (c) because it is used as a synonym for Rome elsewhere in the New Testament.
- 2) Rome was hesitant to accept Pauline authorship likely because they knew Paul had not written it.
- 3) Hebrews was first known and used in Rome. Clement of Rome is the first to quote from it.
- 4) Three times in chapter 13 leaders of the community are referred to as ἡγούμενοι. Outside the New Testament ἡγούμενος is used to designate leaders within a Christian congregation only in documents associated with Rome (1 *Clement*, *Shepherd of Hermas*).²⁴
- 5) The description of the readers' early sufferings (10:32-34) is compatible with the Claudian expulsion edict or the Neronian persecution (depending on when Hebrews is dated) but not compatible with the known persecution of other early Christian communities, especially Jerusalem.
- 6) Hebrews seems to be dealing with a Christian community related to a nonconformist type of Judaism such as was found in Rome.
- 7) The reference to ceremonial foods in 13:9 suggests a tendency similar to what was earlier seen in the church at Rome (cf. Romans 14).
- 8) Allusions to the readers' generosity are consistent with what is known of the early Roman church which was notable for its generosity from its earliest days. This generosity does not seem to fit other proposed locations (especially Jerusalem).

²³ Similar but less extensive lists appear in Lane, *Hebrews*, lviii; idem, "Roman Christianity," 215-16 and Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 698. It should not be assumed that every proponent of the Roman hypothesis employs all of the listed arguments. Other arguments in favor of a Roman destination are less common. F.F. Bruce mentions M.A.R. Turker's argument based on similarities between Hebrews and the Canon of the Roman Mass (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 14 n. 55). Knut Backhaus argues that a Roman destination is suggested by the fact that Hebrews follows Romans but precedes 1 Corinthians in P⁴⁶ and a few minuscules ("Der Hebräerbrief und die Paulus-Schule," *BZ* 37/2 [1993]: 198).

²⁴ John A.T. Robinson goes beyond this and suggests that parallels between Hebrews and other aspects of 1 *Clement* and Hermas reflect similar conditions and outlook (*Redating the New Testament* [London: SCM, 1976], 208-210).

- 9) Timothy (mentioned in 13:24b) was known to the Roman church. Presumably he would not have been known in some of the other proposed destinations, especially those in Palestine.
- 10) Hebrews shows striking affinity with 1 Peter, a document of Roman Christianity.

Without exception these ten arguments are weak. Taken together they constitute a cumulative case that is also weak. The fact that Hebrews 13:24 mentions Italy suggests some connection with Italy (but not necessarily Rome). The argument for the Roman hypothesis based on this verse is generally considered the strongest (though some would instead cite the second argument). For this reason more space will be devoted to assessing it. (Because more attention will be paid to it, it will also be treated last.) It is my contention that none of these arguments provides *any* reason to consider Rome as the place where the recipients of Hebrews resided. In what follows each of them will be briefly examined to demonstrate this contention.

Rome and Non-Pauline Authorship

The Christian community in Rome refused to acknowledge Pauline authorship of Hebrews until the fifth century. It is surmised that they refused because they knew Paul had not written the epistle. At least since Holtzmann many have considered this strong support for the Roman hypothesis.²⁵ It is not.

If the Roman church knew the identity of the author, how did they know this? According to proponents of the Roman hypothesis the reason they knew is that they were the recipients of the letter. But they could have come by this knowledge just as

²⁵ Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), 1885), 326; idem, "Hebräerbrief," in *Bibel-Lexicon* (ed. Daniel Schenkel; 5 vols.; Leipzig: F.A. Brodhaus, 1869), 627. Holtzmann seems to have seen this as stronger evidence than even the greeting in 13:24.

easily if Hebrews had been written *from* Rome or elsewhere in the vicinity. But it is doubtful that the identity of the author was known in Rome. If his identity were known, then we would expect that someone from the Roman church would have settled the patristic debates about Hebrews' place in the canon by declaring who the real author was. The fact that no one did indicates that the epistle was as anonymous to them as it was to everyone else. Why did the Roman church reject Pauline authorship? For the very reasons that modern scholars do. Hebrews lacks the stereotyped Pauline introduction, the language and style are not Paul's, the theological themes are not those treated by Paul in any of his letters, etc.. The fact that Clement of Alexandria and Origen recognized these inconsistencies with Pauline authorship shows that members of the Roman church could have discerned these difficulties for Pauline authorship just as easily as any modern scholar. Unlike Clement and Origen, the Roman church felt no need to contrive a connection with Paul.²⁶

Known at Rome from an Early Date, Affinities with 1 Clement

Kümmel refers to "strong points of contact" between *1 Clement* and Hebrews that can scarcely be described on any other basis than literary acquaintance.²⁷ In

²⁶ Hugh Montefiore suggests that the Roman church may have been disinclined toward Pauline authorship because Hebrews does not appear to be consistent with the doctrine of second repentance attested in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964] 31). Perhaps, but this is not necessary to explain their rejection of Pauline authorship.

²⁷ Werner George Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; trans. Howard Clark Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 392. Because Clement does not directly quote Hebrews it has sometimes been suggested that the similarities between these works could be explained in other ways. Gerd Theissen, for example, thinks the authors drew from a common tradition (*Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1969], 34-37). However, Donald Hagner has argued that *1 Clement* alludes to editorial segments of Hebrews that would not have been part of a common tradition (*The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* [NovTSup 34; Leiden: Brill, 1973], 179-95). Paul Ellingworth concluded his own study of the issue by stating: "The data which we have examined thus lead us generally to reaffirm... the independence of Clement's thought, at many crucial points, from that of Hebrews, and Clement's indebtedness to a common tradition, as least some strands of which are

addition to providing evidence for Hebrews' *terminus ad quem*, *1 Clement* is also the earliest attested use of Hebrews. Raymond Brown describes this as a "major argument for a Roman destination."²⁸ To the contrary, this provides no reason for accepting the Roman hypothesis.

Scholars such as E. Earle Ellis, Udo Schnelle and George MacRae have cited the same similarities with *1 Clement* as evidence that Hebrews was written *from* Rome. Ellis points out that if Hebrews was composed in Italy then it would have been available at Rome in a copy which Clement could have used that had either been retained by the author or made by the Roman church.²⁹ Schnelle sees the likely reflection of Hebrews 1:3-4 in *1 Clement* 36:2-5 as indicative of a common place of origination "since a church tradition available to both authors may stand behind both texts."³⁰ Brown discounts such explanations because writers of the Roman church have views different from those in Hebrews. More probable, he says, is the view that Hebrews, designed as a corrective work, "was received by the Roman church but not enthusiastically appropriated there."³¹ He even says that such an explanation "is almost necessitated" by Rome's attitude toward the canonical status of Hebrews and Pauline authorship. But as we have already seen, nothing of the sort is required to account for Rome's hesitance to accept Pauline authorship (and, in turn, Hebrews' canonicity). The fact that Clement knew Hebrews simply provides no evidence that

shared by Hebrews. However, this agreement has not led us, either on logical grounds or from comparison of the relevant texts, to question the general consensus of *1 Clement*'s literary dependence on Hebrews" ("Hebrews and *1 Clement*: Literary Dependence or Common Tradition," *BZ* 23 [1979]: 262-69).

²⁸ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 700.

²⁹ Ellis, *Making of the NT Documents*, 286.

³⁰ Udo Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (trans. M. Eugene Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 367; cf. George W. MacRae, *Hebrews* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1983), 7.

³¹ Brown, *Introduction*, 700.

Hebrews was written to Rome. Even the idea Hebrews was written *in* Rome is more than is required to account for Clement's knowledge of the letter.³² As for the differences between the views of Hebrews and those expressed in Christian documents produced in Rome, Brown's objection carries no weight unless one holds to a kind of communal determinism of outlook that ensures that the members of a broad community will always hold the same kinds of views. This is both implausible and demonstrably false with regard to Roman Christianity; Clement, Marcion, Justin Martyr and Valentinus were hardly unanimous in their convictions.

The real Achille's heel of this argument, though, is the simple fact that Clement is acquainted with other epistolary literature. Hagner considers it certain that he used Romans and 1 Corinthians and probable that he used Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Timothy and Titus.³³ One might argue that Clement knew Romans because he was a member of the recipient church. But what of the other letters? No one has ever cited his knowledge of these letters as evidence that they were written to Rome. If Clement's knowledge of Hebrews is good reason for believing it was sent to Rome, then perhaps Ephesians was also originally written to Rome! After all, there is some question regarding the original destination of Ephesians and Clement is likewise the first writer to reflect a knowledge of it. It should be clear that the mere fact that Clement knows a writing has no evidentiary value with regard to the location of its original audience. As with the other letters with which he is acquainted, he probably had access to Hebrews because it was being circulated among the various Christian communities from a very early date.

³² Clement probably knew Hebrews because he had access to a copy of the letter made for one or more churches in Italy, but this does not mean the author of Hebrews had to have been in Rome *per se*.

³³ Hagner, *Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 195-237.

Clement's knowledge of Hebrews constitutes neither a strong argument nor even "meager support" for the Roman hypothesis.³⁴

The ἡγούμενοι of Hebrews

Three times in Hebrews 13 the leaders of the readers' religious community are referred to as ἡγούμενοι (vv. 7, 17, 24). According to Lane, among Christ-followers subsequent to Hebrews the use of ἡγούμενοι and compounds built on it "to designate community office appears to be confined to documents associated with the church in Rome."³⁵ Three passages in *1 Clement* and two in *Hermas* are cited in support (*1 Clem.* 1:3; 21:6; 37:2; *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.6; 3.9.7).

It has to be questioned whether the use of ἡγούμενοι has any relevance whatsoever to either the issue of Hebrews' origination or destination. Ἡγούμενος was an extremely common and flexible term for a ruler or leader. If Hebrews, *1 Clement* and *Hermas* used the same *uncommon* term in the same *distinctive* manner, this might be admissible as evidence. But they do not use exactly the same terms (ἡγούμενοι is used only *1 Clem.* 1:3 and 37:2; the other passages use προηγούμενοι). They do not use the terms in a similar distinctive manner. The terms are not frequent enough in literature known to be associated with Rome to indicate an idiosyncratic Roman designation for congregational leaders.

Furthermore, is misleading to claim that the word is used in reference to Christian leaders outside of Hebrews only in documents associated with Roman Christianity. Lane creates the illusion of significance by limiting the referent of the term (1) to leaders in Christian communities and (2) to texts that were written

³⁴ So Howard Clark Kee, *Understanding the New Testament* (4th ed.; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 333.

³⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, 2.526; cf. Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, 145.

subsequent to Hebrews. (He seems to really intend texts that describe events after Hebrews was written since the gospels and Acts are usually thought to have been written after the early date he assigns to Hebrews.) But these limitations are artificial and exclude numerous NT uses of the word, including references to Christian leaders that have nothing to do with Rome. For example, the leaders mentioned in Hebrews consist of the community's past leadership (13:7) and a more recent generation who seem to have recently been given a formal leadership role (13:17). This second use of ἡγούμενοι is similar to the use of the same word in a narrative describing an event in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22). But even if Lane's limitations were valid, verbal and adjectival cognates are used in patristic references to leaders in other Christian communities. For example, Lampe lists the word as referring to monastic superiors which might imply an Egyptian use (in Byzantine and modern Greek the term refers to an abbot).³⁶ Moulton and Milligan cite an epitaph from Laodicea describing a woman named Doudousa as "Hegoumenos of the holy pure Church of God."³⁷

Of the parallels cited, *1 Clement* 1:3 is the passage that comes closest to using ἡγούμενοι in the same way as Hebrews 13. Clement commends the Corinthians for ὑποτασσόμενοι τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν ("submitting to your rulers"). Here the word is clearly not used as a distinctive reference to leaders in the church at Rome. Rather, it is a general term for leaders (cf. 60:4 where it refers to civic leaders) that is being used to refer to leaders within the Corinthian congregations. One could equally argue from this that the term is evidence for the Corinthian destination of Hebrews.³⁸

³⁶ G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), s.v. ἡγούμενος (p. 601).

³⁷ MM, s.v. ἡγέομαι (p. 277).

³⁸ Montefiore, who argues for a Corinthian destination, does not use this as evidence for his proposal. Quite the opposite, he insists that *1 Clement* and Hebrews cannot have been produced by people who

It is irrelevant that it occurs in a document of Roman Christianity; the reasoning would be the same as that employed by advocates of the Roman hypothesis. In either case the reasoning would be faulty.

The references to ἡγούμενοι (or προηγούμενοι) in *Hebrews*, *1 Clement* and *Hermas* arose out of the common linguistic stock of the first century. These were extremely common words and there is nothing distinctive about their usage in these documents. The fact that all three happen to use the word(s) to refer to leaders within their religious communities is coincidental and provides no significant point of contact between *Hebrews* and Roman Christianity.

The Persecution of the Recipient's Community

Hebrews mentions the past persecutions of the recipients (10:32-34) as well as their present difficulties and anticipated persecution (10:25; 12:3-11). This is thought by some to be incompatible with what is known of the persecution of the Christ-movement in Palestine. In contrast, proponents of the Roman hypothesis believe it is compatible with their view and even that it links information from the epistle with known historical events in the history of Roman Christianity. It is a necessary condition for the Roman hypothesis that it be compatible with the data in *Hebrews*, but it should be remembered that compatibility is not necessarily evidence in itself for the Roman hypothesis. Trotter represents the predominant version of the Roman hypothesis when he states:

There are nevertheless persecutions that fit both what we know of the community at Rome and the statements in *Hebrews* concerning the persecutions that the readers experienced. References to the loss of property, public exposure to abuse and persecution, and being

knew the same liturgical service at Rome because they have contradictory doctrines of sacrifice. He discounts *1 Clement* as evidence for any destination. See Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 28-31.

imprisoned (Heb. 10:32-34) but not having suffered to the point of shedding blood (Heb. 12:4) perfectly fit the situation of the Christian community in Rome between A.D. 49 and A.D. 64—after the persecution of Claudius (a bloodless persecution so far as we know) and yet before the persecution of Nero (one in which members of the community suffered to the point of death).³⁹

The chief difficulty with this interpretation is that it assumes too much for the Claudian expulsion edict of 41 or 49 C.E..⁴⁰ Despite Seutonius' mention of the instigations of "Chrestus" (many see this as a misspelling of "Christus"), there is no clear indication that Claudius' order had anything to do with the Christ-movement. It also assumes too much about the nature of the Claudian "persecution." The contradictory reports of Seutonius, Dio Cassius and Luke report a ban on meetings and the expulsion from the city of all or part of the Jewish population, but there is no indication of public exposure or imprisonment as in Hebrews (the loss of property would probably attend expulsion). Lane speculates that the Christians "had been exposed to public ridicule because they had been defenseless against the seizure of their property."⁴¹ Whether this was the result of judgements by public magistrates for supposed infractions or the result of looting he doesn't know. He doesn't explain how some Christians had become imprisoned.

³⁹ Andrew H. Trotter, *Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews* (GNTE; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), *Interpreting*, 37.

⁴⁰ There is confusion about whether there was one or two Claudian edicts concerning the Jews of Rome. The statements of Seutonius (*Claudius* 25:4), Dio Cassius (60.6.6) and Luke (Acts 18:2) are difficult to harmonize, even if two events are proposed. The commonly accepted date of 49 C.E. comes from a citation from Josephus found in none of his extant works but preserved by the fifth century Christian historian Paulus Orosius. Josephus is reported as writing that the Jews were expelled from Rome during Claudius' ninth year (i.e., 49 C.E.). The incident described by Dio Cassius is not dated but is recorded immediately previous to a number of events that date to 41 C.E.. Seutonius leaves no clues for dating. Luke gives a *terminus ad quem* of about 51 C.E., the usual date of Paul's time in Corinth. It was then that Paul met Priscilla and Aquila who had been come to Corinth from Rome because of the edict. See further Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (vol. 5 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 171-181 and Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 210-216.

⁴¹ Lane, *Hebrews*, lxiv.

Dio Cassius' given reason for the ban on meetings is the growing size and influence of the Jewish population in the city—a perceived threat to social order. Seutonius reports riots among Jews, a more dangerous threat to social stability. But *Hebrews* clearly intimates that the reader's had suffered for their confession of Christ.⁴² Even if *Chrestus* is a misnomer for Christ (of which I am skeptical), neither the report of Dio Cassius nor Seutonius seems to accommodate this fact. It will not fit because the edict appears to have affected the Jewish population generally, not just "Christians." Moreover, the effects it had on Christ-followers was because they were Jews, not because of their commitment to Christ. As Hughes has rightly said, the author of *Hebrews* "is not concerned with the affliction that overtook Jews as such, which would be beside the point, but with the sufferings which his readers had endured in consequence of their having embraced the Christian faith;" in other words, the reference is to anti-Christian, not anti-Jewish hostility.⁴³ Marie Isaacs is correct to conclude: "It is therefore highly unlikely that we have here a reference to Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome."⁴⁴

Bruce recognizes that an event in which Jews were attacked for being Jews would be difficult to reconcile with this passage. However, he feels that 10:32-34 and the events of 49 C.E. (granting this as the probable date of the Claudian expulsion) might fit together because the Jewish believers of Rome "may even have had some persecution to endure at the hands of synagogue authorities in addition to the hostile

⁴² Lane observes that ὀνειδισμός, translated as "reproach" or "insults" in 10:33, is used to describe the reproach bore because of Christ (11:26) and the reproach Christ bore from the insults of others (13:13). Here it "suggests that these Christians had had shared the reproach of Christ" (*Hebrews*, 299).

⁴³ Hughes, *Hebrews*, 428.

⁴⁴ Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 32.

attentions of the pagan population."⁴⁵ But evidence against linking Hebrews 10:32-34 with the Claudian expulsion in this way is found in the text itself; the readers had ministered to those who were in prison. Neither Seutonius, Dio Cassius nor Acts reports incarcerations. Even if we assume that Claudius arrested some Jews (including Christ-followers) and expelled others, for Bruce's rationale to keep its strength the imprisonment referred to in Hebrews would have to have been done at the hands of synagogue rulers. This is quite unlikely. In contrast to Alexandria, the Jewish community in Rome does not appear to have formed a *politeuma*, nor was there a Jewish ethnarch or *gerousia* governing the city's Jewish populace.⁴⁶ The various Jewish communities seem to have been independent of one another. As Penna states, "there is no documentation for a higher administrative body which might have presided over all these groups."⁴⁷ While it is conceivable that an individual synagogue might exert pressure upon Christ-followers it is nigh impossible that they had the power to imprison.

The story of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2) also counts against associating the persecution in Hebrews with the Claudian expulsion, not for what it says as much as for what it does not say. Priscilla and Aquila had gone to Corinth "because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome." The text then quickly moves on to describe

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 270.

⁴⁶ For overviews of what is known about the Jewish community in Rome during this period, see John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 282-319; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 86-108; Henry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (updated by Carolyn Osiek; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 1-45; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 167-93; Romano Penna, *Paul the Apostle: Jew and Greek Alike* (trans. Thomas P. Wahl; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 19-59; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Martin Goodman; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973-87), 3.73-81; Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 201-219; Wolfgang Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in *The Romans Debate* (rev. and expanded; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 85-101.

⁴⁷ Romano Penna, "Judaism [Rome]," *ABD* 3.1074.

Paul's association with them. Luke mentions the Claudian expulsion almost in passing; it simply explains why they were in Corinth. Luke gives no indication that Priscilla and Aquila had suffered for their faith in Rome. He gives no indication that the expulsion was in any way connected with confessing Christ. Yet, throughout Acts Luke regularly makes note of the persecution "Christians" suffered because of their faith, particularly when this was at the hands of other Jews. If the riots in Rome were caused by Jews unfriendly to the message of Christ and members of the Jesus-movement had suffered for their confession, we would expect this to be noted by Luke. But instead he gives no indication that he, Paul or Priscilla and Aquila saw a connection between the expulsion and the activities of the Jesus-movement.

A final reason against associating Chrestus with Christ and the riots with the Christ-movement is the ignorance of Roman Jews about the movement some ten years after the expulsion in 59/60 C.E. when Paul arrived in the city. Acts 28:17 reports that three days after he arrived in Rome, Paul, in order to discuss his plight, called together the most prominent Jews of the area (τοὺς ὄντας τῶν Ἰουδαίων πρῶτους). If Jews had instigated persecution of Christ-followers during the reign of Claudius they would have come from this class. However, they demonstrate no first-hand knowledge of the Jesus-movement, they only know that "everywhere it is spoken against" (v. 22). Their reply to Paul indicates they had received no letters from Jerusalem concerning him nor had anyone coming from there said anything bad about him (28:21). They ask Paul to explain his views because they are ignorant about distinctive "Christian" beliefs. Luke informs us that these prominent Jews of the city did not have an overly negative attitude toward the new movement because they and many more of this number came to meet with Paul at his house (v. 23) to

discuss it. If there had been riots among the city's Jews ten years previous because of the Christ-movement, we would expect familiarity with and hostility towards it on the part of these Roman Jews. Similarly, when Paul wrote to Rome a few years earlier (but still after the Claudian expulsion) he does not describe his readers as a community that had been persecuted for their faith, much less one that had been persecuted by non-Christian Jews. If one is skeptical of the *interpretatio Christiana* of the Claudian expulsion, then there is no firm evidence that Christ-followers in Rome were ever persecuted as such until Nero blamed them for the great fire. Rather than evidence for Hebrews' Roman destination, the descriptions in Hebrews are problematic for the hypothesis if Hebrews is dated early. Those who date Hebrews late can see the earlier persecution as a reference to events in Nero's reign, but in this case the description in Hebrews vastly understates the suffering experienced by Christ-followers in Rome.

Nonconformist Roman Judaism

Hebrews 6:2 mentions ablutions (the word is βαπτισμός not βάπτισμα; cf. 9:10).⁴⁸ According to Bruce "one prominent feature of ... nonconformist Judaism was its practice of ceremonial washings beyond those prescribed in the law."⁴⁹ Whereas Yadin and others have seen these ablutions as reason to link Hebrews with Qumran, Bruce argues that the Hebrews' mention of ablutions "would be equally well satisfied if it is related to another branch of the same [nonconformist] tradition" of which the Qumran group was a part.⁵⁰ He then maintains that the Jewish community in Rome

⁴⁸ Unless a variant is accepted in Colossians 2:12, this is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament.

⁴⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 8.

⁵⁰ F.F. Bruce, "Hebrews: A Document of Roman Christianity?" *ANRW* II.25, 3513.

"appears to have preserved nonconformist features, especially in the matter of ceremonial ablutions, which were in due course taken over by Roman Christianity."⁵¹ He feels that this "would chime in well with a Roman destination."⁵² In support he cites the Roman presbyter Hippolytus and the Roman commentator 'Ambrosiaster.'

The term "nonconformist Judaism" reflects the classic understanding of the nature of Judaism discussed in Chapter Two. Perhaps Bruce's point could be reformulated in a way that avoids the problematic assumptions that lie behind his choice of terms. But even granting this possibility for the sake of argument, Bruce's citations do not give any indication that Roman Judaism contained "nonconformist" elements, nor do they support the idea that Roman Christianity took such presumed elements over.

According to Hippolytus, in the Roman church during the late second/early third century candidates for Easter baptism were instructed to undergo a preliminary bath on Maundy Thursday. Bruce admits that this preliminary bath "could have been intended to commemorate Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet in the upper room (John 13, 2-20)" but alleges that "it was more probably a legacy from Roman Judaism."⁵³ He reaches this assessment by juxtaposing Ambrosiaster's fourth-century statement that the Romans had embraced the Christian faith "according to the Jewish rite" apart from the signs and miracles of the apostles (S. Ambrosii, *Opp.* iii 373f). But how does the fact that the Roman church traced its roots back to regular Jewish Christ-followers make it improbable that the preliminary washing was not a development related to the washing of the disciples' feet? Being connected with

⁵¹ Bruce, "Document of Roman Christianity?" 3513; cf. Lane, *Hebrews*, lix.

⁵² Bruce, *Hebrews*, 13.

⁵³ Bruce, "Document of Roman Christianity?" 3513.

Easter, it is natural to see this practice as developing in response to the narrative of Jesus washing his disciples feet a few days before the first Easter.⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is not clear how this would constitute evidence that the earliest Christ-movement in Rome practiced distinctive ablutions. Ablutions were not one-time events as the Maundy Thursday washing was. Rather, they had to do with ritual purity, accounting for one reason why synagogues were often built near the ocean or other sources of water.⁵⁵

Bruce has read a third-century ritual with no obvious Jewish connections back into first-century Roman Judaism and then surmised that it was from there that the later Christian practice derived.⁵⁶ He has used this to support his claim that the first-century Judaism from which the Christ-movement in Rome originated contained "nonconformist" elements regarding ablutions that were preserved by the later Roman church. But his "evidence" for this is attested only for the later church. The circularity is obvious. This provides no reason to locate the recipients of Hebrews in Rome.

It should also be mentioned that Bruce's argument inadvertently raises a difficulty for the Roman hypothesis. Ambrosiaster indicates that the Christ-community in Rome arose within the city's Jewish population apart from the signs and miracles of the apostles. This is consistent with the scant evidence we have for

⁵⁴ In response to Jesus' rebuttal of Peter's refusal to allow his feet to be washed, Peter asked that Jesus wash not just his feet but his hands and head as well (John 13:9). Jesus replied: "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet" (John 13:10, emphasis added).

⁵⁵ See further E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 258-71.

⁵⁶ Cf. George Beasley-Murray: "To assume as is so frequently done without question, that the rite of baptism in Hippolytus is identical in all its particulars with the administration of baptism in the earliest Church is to overlook a great deal of very significant evidence" (*Baptism in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962], 28).

the origin of the Roman church. When Paul wrote to the Roman church sometime between 55 and 58 C.E. he addresses an established community. We do not know when the gospel first reached Rome, but it would not be implausible to estimate fifteen to twenty years prior to Paul's letter. But neither Romans, Acts nor any other early sources associate the founding of the church with an apostle or other prominent NT personality. It remains probable that the "Christian" message was taken to Rome by pilgrims who became adherents at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). The author of Hebrews does not indicate how his audience had become Christ-followers, but at an early stage they had been acquainted with the sort of miraculous ministry that Ambrosiaster says was not an element in the founding of the Roman church. According to Hebrews the message of salvation first declared by Jesus "was attested to us by those who heard, while God bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit" (2:3-4; cf. 6:4-5). While not determinative, this counts against the Roman hypothesis.

The "Ceremonial Foods" of 13:9

Interpreters who locate the recipients of Hebrews in the Diaspora have a difficult time devising plausible interpretations of Hebrews 13:9. This is illustrated by the lengthy treatments of this verse offered by Attridge and Lane.⁵⁷ The key portion states: "it is good for the heart to be confirmed by grace—not by foods in which those who walk have not been benefited." Donald Guthrie, following A.B. Davidson, says that the "reference to ceremonial foods in 13:9 suggests a tendency

⁵⁷ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 394-396; Lane, *Hebrews*, 530-37.

which is similar to that seen in Romans 14."⁵⁸ Contrary to Guthrie, F.F. Bruce states that since religious food regulations were widespread in the ancient world this verse "provides no clue to the destination of the epistle."⁵⁹ Both are wrong. The referent is not to Jewish *kashrut* or undefined "ceremonial foods" but to shared sacrifices, indicating that the recipients were located within a reasonable distance from the Temple. This point will be argued in a later chapter. But if there were reason to see something less specific being referred to, then Bruce would be correct.

The Generosity of the Roman Church

The author alludes to the generosity the recipients had extended "to the saints" in the past (6:10; cf. 10:34). Bruce argues that the church in Rome was generous. If the recipients resided in Rome, "then the behavior for which our author commends them was a precedent for the reputation for Christian charity which the Roman church enjoyed in later times."⁶⁰ The texts Bruce cites to show that Rome had a reputation for generosity at an early date are problematic but need not detain us. Rome was not the only generous church in the first century. The fact that the readers had been generous provides no reason to associate Hebrews with Rome in particular.

If a simple parallel of generosity is enough evidence to posit the location of the recipients, then we could more easily argue that Hebrews was written to one of the churches of the Pauline mission. In Paul's letters the members of the Jerusalem church are referred to as "the saints" (Rom 15:25-26; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 9:1). Each of these are texts mentioning the generosity extended to the Jerusalem church by other churches. Of the churches that participated in the Paul's offering for "the saints,"

⁵⁸ Guthrie, *Introduction*, 698.

⁵⁹ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 377.

⁶⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 151.

Philippi would provide a better candidate than Rome (compare Phil 4:10, 15-18 with Heb 13:16). As elsewhere, the real force of this "argument" is that it is supposed to be incompatible with a Palestinian destination, not that it actually gives any evidence in favor of locating the recipients at Rome.

Timothy

It is not clear why mention of Timothy (13:23) would support locating the readers in Rome rather than one of the churches in the Pauline mission. After all, Timothy would have been well-known in most of the churches in Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. It is not clear that he would have been personally known in Rome. Paul conveys Timothy's greeting to the Roman congregation in Romans 16:21 but has to identify him as his fellow worker, suggesting that the majority of his addressees would not know who he was. It is, of course, possible that Timothy subsequently made his way to Rome and would have been known there when Hebrews was written, but the mere fact that Timothy is mentioned in Hebrews gives us no reason for locating the readers in Rome rather than elsewhere. The real point of this "argument" seems only to be that the Roman hypothesis avoids a difficulty that is thought to attend locating the recipients in Palestine. But, as the next chapter will show, this is not a difficulty for a Palestinian destination.

Affinities with 1 Peter

Craig Koester notes that "similarities between Hebrews and 1 Peter may point to reliance on some of the same early Christian traditions, possibly mediated through Christian circles at Rome."⁶¹ Earlier Robinson suggested that the parallels between

⁶¹ Craig R. Koester, "The Epistle to the Hebrews in Recent Study," *CurBS* 2 (1994): 130.

Hebrews and 1 Peter, a document associated with Rome, are to be explained by the two epistles' "common context and temporal proximity."⁶² Hewitt similarly cited parallels with 1 Peter as reason to associate Hebrews with Roman Christianity.⁶³ Hurst has culled the literature to compile an extensive list of 38 parallels that have been noted between Hebrews and 1 Peter.⁶⁴ Three of them are particularly striking. Hebrews 11:13 says the heroes of faith were "strangers and exiles" on the earth (ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί); 1 Peter 2:11 exhorts Christ-followers "as aliens and strangers" (ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους). Hebrews 10:22 encourages the recipients to draw near in the assurance of faith "with hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience" (ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς) while 12:24 refers to the "sprinkled blood" (αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ) of the new covenant. The only other place in the New Testament outside Hebrews to use this language of "sprinkling" is 1 Peter 1:2 where the author says his readers were elect in accordance with God's foreknowledge for sanctification of the Spirit, obedience and for "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Hebrews 13:20 refers to Jesus as "the great shepherd of the sheep" while 1 Peter refers to him as "the shepherd and overseer of your souls" (2:25) and "the chief shepherd" (5:4).

Do such parallels give us any reason to think that Hebrews was written to Rome? If we grant for the sake of argument that some kind of temporal and geographic proximity between the authors of Hebrews and 1 Peter is required to account for these similarities, then we should see this as evidence that Hebrews was

⁶² Robinson, *Redating*, 210, n. 46.

⁶³ Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1960), 29-30.

⁶⁴ L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 126-27.

written *from* Rome since it is widely agreed that this is where 1 Peter was written from (cf. 1 Peter 5:13). But it is dubious to infer from these kinds of similarities that the documents must be associated with the same church, whether as place of sending or reception. It is true that a great many parallels of varying degrees of correspondence can be found between Hebrews and 1 Peter. Rather than see such similarities as evidence in favor of specific points of origination or destination, Hurst is right to contend that many of them can be accounted for by at least four different factors: (1) common Greek idiom; (2) independent use of the Old Testament; (3) common Christian tradition; and (4) possibly Pauline influence (whether direct or through Christian tradition at points affected by Paul).⁶⁵

It should also be remembered that there are also parallels between Hebrews and other NT writings. For example, Ben Witherington has documented several similarities between Hebrews and Galatians almost as striking as those with 1 Peter.⁶⁶ Yet, no one cites this as a good reason to believe that Hebrews was written to Galatia or wherever Paul was when he composed that epistle. Similarly, David Allen cites a number of similarities between Hebrews and Luke-Acts that also include some striking parallels.⁶⁷ He sees this as evidence of Lukan authorship. If one instead applied the reasoning of those who see affinity with 1 Peter as reason to believe Hebrews was written to Rome, then one could cite Allen's parallels as evidence that both works were written to Theophilus! This is simply a bad argument that gains a measure of plausibility only if one ignores parallels between Hebrews and other NT literature.

⁶⁵ Hurst, *Background of Thought*, 127; cf. pp. 128-130.

⁶⁶ Ben Witherington III, "The Influence of Galatians on Hebrews," *NTS* 37 (1991): 146-52.

⁶⁷ David L. Allen, "The Lukan Authorship of Hebrews: A Proposal," *JOTT* 8 (1996): 1-22.

The factors that Hurst lists are sufficient to account for many of the similarities between Hebrews and 1 Peter—as well as those with Galatians, Acts, Revelation and other NT books from which one can adduce parallels with Hebrews. Some of the remaining parallels could be explained by the close connections between the churches of Jerusalem and Rome and the fact that converts from Jerusalem were likely the founders of the church in Rome (cf. Acts 2:10 and above).⁶⁸ Guthrie acknowledges that many of the parallels may be due to the factors Hurst lists. However, he maintains that "both the number of verbal parallels and their depth of theological correspondence at points seem impressive and suggest some form of literary connection."⁶⁹ That may be true. But rather than identify the point of connection with a community, it is better to see it at the level of author. Hebrews mentions Timothy (13:23), suggesting that its author was associated with the Pauline circle. The author of 1 Peter mentions that he composed his epistle by the aid of Silvanus/Silas (5:12), another person associated with the Pauline circle. More significantly, Silas is often affiliated with Timothy (cf. Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Given that the author of Hebrews knew Timothy, there is a strong likelihood that he would also have known Silas the amanuensis of 1 Peter. Interaction, common influences and mutual exchange of ideas between these individuals could account for some of the more striking similarities more readily

⁶⁸ Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, disciple of Jesus the sage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 23 makes this same point with regard to the similarities between James and 1 Peter, 1 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas that are sometimes cited to show that that epistle was written from Rome. Note that affinities with the exact same texts are being cited to prove two opposite positions: James was written from Rome; Hebrews was written to Rome. Scholars need to decide whether affinities with these texts are evidence of a document's destination or origination. Better yet, they should acknowledge that they have little bearing on either issue.

⁶⁹ George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews in Its First-Century Contexts: Recent Research," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic and Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 440.

than the assumption that one document was sent to Rome and the other from Rome. It is even possible that the amanuensis of 1 Peter is the author of Hebrews. In terms of people that Timothy would travel with (the author of Hebrews says that Timothy will accompany him on his journey if he arrives in time), the most expected person other than Paul would be Silas—particularly if Paul has already been killed. The probability that the author of Hebrews knew Silas and the possibility that he could even be Silas are both plausible explanations for the similarities between Hebrews and 1 Peter, neither of which has any bearing on the destination of the epistle.

"Those from Italy"

In the words of Raymond Brown, Hebrews 13:24 is the most "potentially fruitful element for identifying the recipients."⁷⁰ The relevant salutation in 13:24b reads: ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας. Paul Ellingworth is representative when he describes the interpretation of οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας as "the crucial question" to answer in determining the destination of Hebrews.⁷¹ It can be translated as "The ones from Italy greet you," "Those from Italy greet you," or "The Italians greet you." Most agree that this brief greeting is not an explicit statement about the location of the epistle's destination or origination. It is remotely possible that it has no relation to either. However, it is generally agreed that there is high probability that this phrase reflects either the epistle's place of origination or destination. I see no reason to disagree with this consensus.⁷²

⁷⁰ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, 146.

⁷¹ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 29.

⁷² Montefiore has suggested that the phrase refers to Italians known to both the author and recipients, namely Priscilla and Aquila (*Hebrews*, 254). This is an *ad hoc* means of avoiding the negative implications the other readings have for his novel hypothesis about Apollos writing the epistle from Ephesus to Corinth. Chiefly cited in its favor is the fact that Priscilla and Aquila are the only persons in the NT said to have "come from Italy" (Acts 18:2). However, nothing in Hebrews suggests that 13:24 is anything

A few scholars have questioned the authenticity of Hebrews 13. Others who accept the bulk of Hebrews 13 question the authenticity of verses 22-25. Obviously, if there is good reason to suspect these verses, then this counts strongly against the Roman hypothesis; without it there is little reason to connect Hebrews with Italy at all, much less Rome. But there are no good reasons to doubt the authenticity of any part of Hebrews 13. Chapter Seven will briefly discuss a recent challenge to this claim but here it will simply be assumed that 13:24 is an integral part of the epistle.

If the phrase reflects *origination*, then the author was in Italy when he wrote and sent greetings from his hosts to his readers. If it reflects *destination*, then the author was conveying the greetings of Italian expatriates living abroad back to their countrymen. It is generally acknowledged that grammar alone excludes neither understanding of the phrase. However, while not definitive, some proponents of the Roman hypothesis feel that grammatical considerations do favor their view. First, we are sometimes told that a general distinction between ἀπό and ἐκ favors this understanding. Second, it is often stated that understanding the phrase as descriptive of expatriate Italians writing home is the "more natural" understanding of the preposition. Third, William Lane cites an alleged parallel passage from Acts 18:2 to support both the preceding point and the use of 'Italy' as a designation for Rome. Finally, given the admission that grammatical arguments are not decisive, we are told that "logical" considerations of the phrase lend further support. I will evaluate

other than the greeting of one group of Christ-followers to another. The fact that Priscilla and Aquila came "from Italy" gives no support to the idea that οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας functions in Hebrews as some kind of nickname for two individuals. The statistical observation that no one else in the NT is said to have come "from Italy" is irrelevant.

each of these in turn and then offer further considerations of my own. But before doing so one observation will be made.

Proponents of the Roman hypothesis regularly say that Hebrews 13:24 is susceptible to two interpretations, though the one is more likely. Earlier writers tend to see the likelihood of their preferred interpretation as only slightly more likely than not. But the strength of probability attached to this estimation increases in more recent literature. Some recent writers even proceed as if there is only one defensible interpretation. Once again Salevao provides a useful illustration. He simply asserts that the phrase in question "means that the writer and some other Italians sent their greetings to those back in Rome." Alternative interpretations "cannot be sustained by the available evidence." If one of the alternatives was indeed the case "then the statement should have been more specific" (e.g. "those from Italy who are in Rome"). In this way Salevao claims that 13.24 "provides a concrete indication of the Roman destination of the letter."⁷³ Earlier proponents of the Roman hypothesis were not so bold. Recent proponents apparently take the fact that numerous scholars endorse the probability of the "away from" interpretation as indicating that it enjoys a high degree of probability. This is to confuse popularity with probability. No matter how many scholars endorse a view as probable, this adds nothing to the degree of probability that is appropriately assigned to it.

The Distinction Between ἀπό and ἐκ

In the New Testament period the semantic ranges of the various prepositions overlap much more than they do in classical writers. Prepositions with similar

⁷³ Salevao, *Legitimation*, 119.

meanings began to be confused with one another as the Greek language was adopted by increasing numbers of non-Greeks. They became more flexible and interchangeable. Nevertheless, until one preposition was close to absorbing another completely each would retain some distinctive use.

A difficulty arising in the exegesis of certain passages is knowing whether an author's choice of one preposition versus another is significant; whether he intends to convey something by the preposition that would not be conveyed if he had chosen a similar one. The prepositions ἀπό and ἐκ were two that had a fair amount of semantic overlap in the first century (ἀπό eventually supplanted ἐκ completely). Hebrews 13:24b is seen by some as one of those passages in which the choice of ἀπό over ἐκ could reflect an author maintaining a distinction between them. Hebrews' well-known classical tendencies gives this possibility credence.⁷⁴

The broad distinction between ἀπό and ἐκ that some feel may be significant to our understanding of this passage is as follows: ἐκ means *from within* while ἀπό indicates merely *the general starting-point*; a man will go ἐκ a house, but ἀπό a country.⁷⁵ It is easy to demonstrate that this is not a distinction consistently observed in the New Testament. But, according to Moule, "it may be that *more often than not* the distinction holds."⁷⁶ He cites the passage in question as an example of conformity.

⁷⁴ On the style of Hebrews see James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), lvi-lxiv and Nigel Turner, "The Style of the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *Style*, vol. IV of James Hope Moulton, *The Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 106-13. However, as Moffatt and Turner make clear, the author does not display a pure classical style. He also displays tendencies derived from the Septuagint. According to F.C. Conybeare and St. George Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1905), ἀπό in the LXX is often little more than a sign of the genitive, like the English 'of,' provided that the genitive be partitive (p. 83, sec. 92).

⁷⁵ C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 72.

⁷⁶ Moule, *Idiom Book*, 72. Emphasis in original.

Assuming that the distinction is valid and this passage is an example of conformity, what implication should we draw? Proponents of the Roman hypothesis would want us to draw the implication that if the Italians referred to were in Italy sending their greetings elsewhere the author would have used ἐκ. His use of ἀπό indicates that the persons conveying their greetings originally came from Italy but are now elsewhere.

This is problematic for three reasons. First, in the illustration of the distinction cited above the prepositions modify a verb of motion. In Hebrews 13:24 the prepositional phrase modifies a pronoun. Before accepting Moule's judgement that our passage is an example of conformity I would prefer to see some examples where this distinction holds in the modification of pronouns. Second, it is difficult to see how this text is clearly an example of the distinction given its brevity. Third, even if we grant that Moule is correct (and he may be), it is still not clear that this supports the conclusion that the greeters are outside of Italy sending greetings home. It could be that these Italians are within Italy; that is not precluded by the grammatical distinction. As A.T. Robertson states in his discussion of this distinction, "ἀπό does not deny the 'within-ness'; it simply does not assert it as ἐκ does."⁷⁷ Thus, the grammatical distinction, even if valid, simply cannot support the freight the inference demands.

⁷⁷ A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th ed.; New York: George H. Doran, 1923), 577.

The "Normal" or "Primitive" Meaning of ἀπό

A related consideration is the appeal to the "primitive" meaning of ἀπό as that of separation.⁷⁸ The argument is that since separation is the primitive meaning of the word we should understand this phrase as referring to Italians "away from" Italy rather than in Italy. The primitive meaning of ἀπό appears to mean its original use. It is interesting to know how the word was used in earliest times. However, this bit of trivia has little bearing upon our exegesis since everyone acknowledges that the original use is not the only use of the word during the first century C.E.. It would be linguistically irresponsible to insist that all subsequent meanings of a word implicitly contain some primitive meaning. We will dismiss all strong appeals to the primitive meaning of ἀπό as fallacious.

Very common are appeals to the "normal" or "natural" meaning of ἀπό as separation. It is said that the word normally or naturally means "from" in the sense of "away from." From this it is inferred that the author and the Italian greeters are not in Italy at the time of composition—they are "away from" Italy. Furthermore, expatriate Italians would naturally want to append greetings if the letter was being sent to their countrymen but would not likely have reason to do so if the letter was going elsewhere. Since the native host community did not likewise send greetings to the recipients, it is concluded that the letter and the special greetings from the Italians were most likely intended for people living someplace in Italy. Andrew Trotter is one particularly confident of this line of reasoning. In his opinion "here it is *certainly*

⁷⁸ There is support for this kind of description in some of the grammars, e.g., Maximillian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (trans. Joseph Smith; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1963; repr. 1994), §132.

the more natural reading to let ἀπό have its normal sense of separation."⁷⁹ According to him this is a "compelling" argument from silence.⁸⁰

One of two different things are usually intended when someone refers to the "general," "normal," "central," or "natural" meaning of a word. The first is an alleged common component shared by the various definitions one might find listed in a lexicon under a given word form. The second is a statistically predominant meaning which should be assumed unless contextual considerations indicate that a statistically less frequent meaning is intended by an author or speaker. The latter seems to be what Trotter and others who appeal to the normal or natural meaning of ἀπό have in mind.

The implicit logic goes something like this: X many usages of word W have been identified by grammarians and lexicographers. Meaning A accounts for 75 percent of all occurrences, B for 15 percent, C for 7 percent, D, E and F for the remaining 3 percent. Meaning A, because of its statistical predominance, is the "normal" or "natural" meaning of word W. Meaning A should be assumed unless the context demands one of the other meanings. The rarer usages require more contextual support to warrant identifying them as the proper meaning for a given text.

J.P. Louw notes that this sense of normal/natural/common meaning is close to what linguists would call the *unmarked* meaning of a word.⁸¹ The unmarked meaning is understood as that meaning which would be readily applied in a text with minimal context to help determine meaning. Though not as explicit as they might be,

⁷⁹ Trotter, *Interpreting*, 36. Emphasis added.

⁸⁰ Trotter, *Interpreting*, 36.

⁸¹ J.P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (SemeiaSt; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982), 34.

proponents of the Roman hypothesis seem to be arguing that the phrase in Hebrews 13:24b is a minimal context situation with no limiting factors. As such we should understand the preposition ἀπό in accordance with its statistically predominate meaning. The predominate meaning of ἀπό conveys the idea of separation; it usually means "from" in the sense of "away from." Therefore it is natural to understand the ones sending greetings in Hebrews 13:24b as people "away from" Italy most likely writing home.

In response, while unmarked meanings may be related to frequency of occurrence it is not at all clear that this so. For some word forms no one meaning predominates so much that we can simply identify it as the "normal" one. Each of the two or three most common meanings may occur nearly as often as one another. Second, the unmarked meaning one assigns to a word in a minimal context situation will often vary according to that person's individual experience and background. For example, without anything in the context to clarify, someone from a ranching community, a stockbroker and a merchant would each assign different meanings to the sentence "They had a large amount of stock."⁸² Third, Hebrews 13:24b could be an example of a common idiomatic use of the preposition to indicate someone's local origin and thus translated as "Greetings to you from the Italians."⁸³ If it is idiomatic, then the value of considering the "normal" sense of ἀπό is considerably mitigated since idioms must be understood as whole entities. In this case we would want to identify the unmarked meaning of the entire idiomatic construction.

⁸² Cf. Louw, *Semantics*, 34-35.

⁸³ So BAGD, 87. Bruce (*Hebrews*, 391) and Hughes (*Hebrews*, 594) both endorse the NEB's similar rendering: "Greetings to you from our Italian friends!"

Finally, we must be careful not to assume that what *we* think is the most natural understanding of the phrase is necessarily what the author and original readers would have assumed. Since we do not have any evidence indicating what they in fact understood (or there would be no debate), then it is prudent for us to consider what those culturally and linguistically nearer to the original readers of the epistle understood when they read this phrase. We will attempt to determine this after considering the final two lines of reasoning.

Excursus: Some Informal Observations about οἱ ἀπό P in ancient Greek

Proponents of the Roman hypothesis claim that ἀπό retains a primitive sense of "away from." This is supposed to make it probable that a person described as ἀπό some place P would be "away from P." But this kind of *a priori* claim needs to be verified by empirical verification. To make an exhaustive study of this construction in ancient Greek literature would be a tedious and extremely time consuming task. One would have to identify constructions using a singular definite article, a plural definite article and those using relative pronouns. But such a study is not necessary for my purposes here. If one examines a representative sample of Greek texts that use this construction it quickly becomes clear that ἀπό does *not* retain a primitive sense implying "away from."

For my sample I began by searching the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* for examples that closely resemble Hebrews 13:24, instructing the database to identify passages in which the phrase "those from" (οἱ ἀπό) occurs. I briefly looked at each hit up through the seventh century (several hundred examples), discarding common partitives and marking those in which a proper name closely followed the phrase.

Examples in broken texts, those in which it was not immediately clear whether the proper noun was a place name or personal name and clear quotations of earlier examples were passed over. When several examples of the construction were found in a single author, the first few were marked and the rest passed over unless a subsequent example showed some noticeable variance from those already marked. After this procedure the marked examples were excerpted into their own document file and printed out for closer examination.

To supplement the samples taken from the *TLG*, I surveyed the openings and closings found in Exler's study of Greek letters.⁸⁴ Those in which a person is named followed by ἀπό and a geographical name were marked. Many of these were examined more closely in the relevant published editions. Furthermore, I inspected the letters published in 15 random volumes of the *Oxyrhynchus papyri*.

My sample base does not include all the varieties of construction that might be relevant. Not does it include all types of texts (e.g. no inscriptions were examined). Thus it is insufficient as a basis for accurate statistics about the various ways in which οἱ ἀπό P and related constructions were used in any given time period or type of literature. But enough texts were examined that a few observations can be made about the use of this construction. A more thorough study may bring to light additional tendencies or require adjustment to some of the observations I make about what is usual or frequent. My informal observations are the following:

1. In narratives the idiom is frequently used to refer to people of a different geographic origin than the author, the speaker or implied readers. Sometimes it merely indicates the place of someone's residence (as in the case of

⁸⁴ Francis Xavier Exler, *A Study in Greek Epistolography: The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1923; repr. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

expatriates), other times it carries ethnic connotations. The latter is usually found when persons are referred to who belong to a different ethnic group than the author or expected readers.

2. An analogous construction is used to refer to the members of groups characterized by philosophical commitment, e.g. οἱ ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος (Platonists), οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς (Stoics), οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς κυνικῆς φιλοσοφίας (Cynics), οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς σκέψεως (skeptics). They clearly cannot be "away from" any place.
3. There are numerous examples in which a person "from" a place is located at that place and numerous examples in which they are elsewhere. No tendencies were observed that would support the idea that ἀπὸ in this construction retains a primitive meaning of "away from" that makes it probable that the persons referred to are "away from" the geographical location named.
4. In official documents and business correspondence this construction is a legal formula for the precise identification of the parties and indicates their regular place of domicile. Parties drawing up the document or sending the correspondence usually identify themselves in this way. In the papyri letters the most common form of the construction follows the pattern *S τῶν ἀπὸ P*, where *P* identifies a metropolis, city, village or nome. One also occasionally finds variations. The most common are expanded lists of descriptions ending with a city name followed by ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως ("from the same city"). Others are also sometimes found, such as τῶν ἀπ' Ὀξυρύγχων πόλεως Ἰουδαίων ("the Jews from Oxyrhynchus") in a registration of sale referring to the former owners of part of a house (*P. Oxy.* 335, dated 85 C.E.) and Ἰουδαίου τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀλεξανδρε(ίας) in a letter by an Alexandrian Jew names Helenos complaining to the governor about being required to pay the poll tax (*CPJ* II 151, dated 5-4 B.C.E.).
5. In letters the tendency is for authors who identify themselves as "from" a place to be *in* that place at the time of composition. For example, letters from Oxyrhynchus very frequently identify their senders as "S τῶν ἀπ' Ὀξυρύγχων πόλεως." Most of these letters are copies retained by their senders, so we know with certainty that the persons ἀπ' Ὀξυρύγχων were not "away from" Oxyrhynchus.
6. New Testament texts show no marked differences from other Greek texts.

The Parallel with Acts 18:2

William Lane offers a two-part argument based upon an alleged parallel with Acts 18:2 for why Hebrews 13:24b is best understood to support the Roman

hypothesis. He writes: "in the only parallel from the NT οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας clearly means 'from Italy' in the sense of outside Italy (Acts 18:2). The text refers to Aquila and his wife Priscilla who . . . had sailed 'from Italy' when Claudius issued a decree expelling the Jews from Rome." He continues, "In this instance 'Italy' denotes 'Rome.' This may be the most natural way of reading [Heb. 13:24b] as well."⁸⁵

Lane is correct that the only other NT occurrence of the phrase οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας occurs in Acts 18:2. The two passages are verbal parallels. However, the weakness of Lane's reasoning here is that Acts 18:2 and Hebrews 13:24b are not *grammatically* parallel. The prepositional phrase ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας performs entirely different functions in each instance. In Hebrews 13:24b it modifies the pronoun οἱ ("the ones").⁸⁶ This use is adjectival. In Acts 18:2 it modifies the participle ἐληλυθότα ("having come"). Here it functions adverbially. "*Having come* from Italy" and "*the ones* from Italy" are not grammatically parallel. The adverbial use in Acts 18:2 requires the force of separation because of the participle. In fact, it is implied even apart from the preposition by the implicit motion of the verbal stem. No such motion is implicit in the pronoun of Hebrews 13:24b. Thus, even though the phrase in Acts 18:2 is verbally similar, it is grammatically different and therefore of no help in understanding our passage.

Lane also maintains that in Acts 18:2 Italy denotes Rome.⁸⁷ It should be pointed out that that is not quite accurate. The passage says that Priscilla and Aquila had come from Italy because they were expelled from Rome. This indicates that they

⁸⁵ Lane, *Hebrews*, 571.

⁸⁶ Technically this is a plural definite article. When used substantively as here it is functionally a pronoun.

⁸⁷ Also see Lane, *Hebrews*, lviii.

chose to leave Rome for a location outside the Italian peninsula but there is no reason to think that they could not have left to another city within Italy. Acts 18:2 is not using the word 'Italy' to denote 'Rome,' it just happens that their expulsion from Rome was also the occasion for them to leave Italy as well. Had they been expelled from a different city in Italy Luke would have worded things exactly the same way.

It could also be that in this case Luke's writing is precise. Rome is not a port city; to travel from Rome across the sea requires one to sail from a different location. Even if Priscilla and Aquila had traveled directly from Rome to Corinth (rather than living for a time at some other Italian city) they could not have sailed from Rome. Rather, they would have most likely sailed from Ostia, Tarentum or one of the port cities on the eastern Italian coast.⁸⁸ It would thus be precise to say that they had come from Italy as a result of the Claudian expulsion. Whether Luke's choice of words was determined by precision cannot be said for certain but neither can it be maintained that Luke is using the word *Italy* to denote *Rome*.⁸⁹

"Logical" Considerations

As mentioned above, proponents of the Roman hypothesis do not usually argue that grammatical considerations alone can settle whether Hebrews 13:24 supports Italy as either the place of the epistle's origin or destination. When all the grammatical arguments have been offered many will concede that the phrase can

⁸⁸ Cf. the map in S. Safrai, "Relations between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; 2 vols.; CRINT; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 1.196-97.

⁸⁹ N.B. This is not the only reason that Italy is thought to be a synonym for Rome in this passage. When an Italian destination for the epistle is assumed it is difficult to know what other city in Italy had a Christian community that could match the descriptions given in the epistle. Brown writes: "That the work was addressed to an Italian city other than Rome is implausible: It has to be a city with considerable Jewish Christian heritage and tendency, where Timothy is known, where the gospel was preached by eyewitnesses (2:3), and where the leaders died for the faith (13:7)—no other city in Italy would have matched all or most of those descriptions" (*Antioch and Rome*, 146 n. 313).

mean simply "the Italians."⁹⁰ Thus Brown writes, "Accordingly, only logic and context, not grammar, can tell us whether Italy is the place of expedition or of destination."⁹¹ As expected, proponents of the Roman hypothesis offer "logical" considerations which they feel lend support to their understanding of the text.

Ellingworth, for example, claims that "to refer to 'the Italians' in Italy would seem otiose, unless indeed the Christian community at the place where Hebrews was written included a large proportion of expatriate Italians."⁹² Brown thinks that if Rome (or elsewhere in Italy) were the place of destination this would seem "less personal to the recipients and more sweeping than the author could vouch for."⁹³ Dods feels that "if the writer was in Italy, he was in some particular locality, and this place he would more naturally have named instead of using the general term 'Italy'."⁹⁴ Similarly, in Attridge's estimation "the rather general term 'Italians' argues against a reference to senders at their place of origin."⁹⁵

Obviously, if the author was in Italy he was in some particular locality. I would not want to dispute that point. But it does not follow that he would have more naturally named that specific locality rather than the country, nor that this designation would seem otiose or less personal to the recipients, nor that it would be a more sweeping claim than the author could vouch for. We can, in fact, easily imagine situations in which such a general term could be used by someone writing

⁹⁰ For example, Attridge notes that the use of ἀπό to indicate place of origin is quite idiomatic and writes: "The phrase does not necessarily indicate anything about the locale in which Italians are situated" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 410).

⁹¹ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, 146.

⁹² Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 735-36.

⁹³ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, 146.

⁹⁴ Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in vol. IV of *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (ed. W. Robertson Nicoll; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897-1910; repr.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 233.

⁹⁵ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 410.

from within Italy *and it be the most appropriate phrase to use*. For instance, if the author were in a location that would not be well-known to people outside Italy, a smaller town or village, he might choose to use the more general term. Or, if the author and his readers were not Italians, it would be quite natural to use the idiomatic phrase even if he was writing from within the country.⁹⁶ For, to his readers the Italians are "from" someplace else; in the readers' minds the Italians are foreigners. Finally, the author was apparently involved in itinerant ministry as many early leaders of the Christ-movement were. If people in several congregations sent greetings it would be easier to simply refer to "the Italians" rather than listing each by name. This would be parallel to the greeting of the churches of Asia which Paul conveys to the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 16:19).

The Natural Way to Read 13:24: the Evidence from the Subscriptions

Thus far several grammatical and logical considerations have been examined. Under scrutiny none prove very strong. Because we do not have any hard evidence indicating what the author and original readers understood by the brief phrase at the center of this discussion it is prudent for us to consider what those culturally and linguistically nearer to the original readers of the epistle understood when they read it. As it happens, we have a fair amount of evidence in this regard in the form of subscriptions found in manuscript copies of the epistle.

⁹⁶ Franz Delitzsch similarly wrote: "if the author was then in Italy, and at the same time was not a native of Italy, he could not have selected any more appropriate designation" (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [2 vols; trans. Thomas L. Kingsbury; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887], 2:407).

The following is a list of the various subscriptions found among the manuscripts (with approximate century of copying in parentheses):⁹⁷

- x (4th) C (5th) 33 (9th): πρὸς Ἑβραίους
- A (5th): πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐγράφη ἀπὸ Ρώμης
- P (9th) 1908 (?): πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐγράφη ἀπὸ Ἰταλίας
- K (9th) 102 (?) 460 (?) 1923 (?) Euthalius^{ms} (?) TR: πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐγράφη ἀπὸ (460 & Euthalius^{ms} add τῆς) Ἰταλίας διὰ Τιμοθέου
- 425 (?) 464 (11th) *alia*: ἡ πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιστολὴ ἐγράφη ἀπὸ Ἰταλίας διὰ Τιμοθέου
- 404 (14th) *alia*: Παύλου ἀποστόλου ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐγράφη ἀπὸ Ἰταλίας διὰ Τιμοθέου
- 1911 (16th): same as 404 but instead of ἀπὸ Ἰταλίας it reads ἀπὸ Ἀθηνῶν· ἄλλοι δέ· ἀπ' Ἰταλίας
- 431 (?): ἡ πρὸς Ἑβραίους αὕτη ἐπιστολὴ ἐγράφη ἀπὸ Ἰταλίας διὰ Τιμοθέου τοῦ ἀποστόλου τοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτοὺς πεμπθέντος διὰ τοῦ μακαρίου Παύλου ἵν' αὐτοὺς διορθώσῃται
- 104 (1087 C.E.) same as 431 but adds Ἑβραϊστί after ἐγράφη

As can be seen in this list, prior to the sixteenth century those scribes who expanded the title beyond πρὸς Ἑβραίους *invariably* understood the ambiguous reference in Hebrews 13:24b as indicating where the epistle was written *from*, not where it was written *to*.⁹⁸ Though not contemporary with the writer of Hebrews, these scribes were both linguistically and temporally far nearer to the writer than we are. At least as early as the fifth century Hebrews 13:24 was intuitively understood as

⁹⁷ Derived from Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and New York: American Bible Society, 1994), 607.

⁹⁸ The variation in the 16th century mss 1911 reading "The epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews written from Athens (but others [say] from Italy) through Timothy" is the only subscription that does not clearly see 13:24 as indicating the place of composition. It gives no indication of where Hebrews was thought to have been sent. It is also quite late and of little value in establishing how the phrase was understood in antiquity.

indicative of the epistle's place of origination. It is doubtful that we moderns trained to learn the language from grammar books composed a millennium and a half later are in a better position than these scribes to determine the "more natural" way to take this phrase.⁹⁹

Not surprisingly, the subscriptional evidence receives scant attention from proponents of the Roman hypothesis. Brown is aware of the subscription to Alexandrinus saying that the epistle was written *from* Rome. He explains it away as follows: "Since Alexandrian scholars attributed Hebrews to Paul, such an addition reflects the theory that Paul wrote it during his Roman captivity."¹⁰⁰ This is an inadequate explanation for at least two reasons. First, the only thing Alexandrinus' subscription indicates is from where the epistle was written. It betrays no bias toward Pauline authorship as some of the others do. Second, it is well known that Origen and other Alexandrians denied strict Pauline authorship and attempted to link the epistle to the apostle by indirect means. It is going too far to explain the scribal interpretation as the product of a pervasive Alexandrian view on the matter.

Lane quotes two of the subscriptions. According to him they "show that v 24b was interpreted *in certain circles* as a greeting from within Italy."¹⁰¹ He then dismisses them because of the supposed parallel with Acts 18:2. That parallel was discussed above and found to be merely verbal and of no significance to this passage. As for

⁹⁹ In light of the subscriptional evidence Dods was clearly overconfident when he chastised another scholar for suggesting that origination was the natural way to understand the passage: "Vaughn is certainly wrong in saying that the more natural suggestion of the words would be that the writer is himself in Italy and speaks of the Italian Christians surrounding him. The more natural suggestion, on the contrary, is that the writer is absent from Italy and is writing to it and that therefore the native Italians who happen to be with him join him in the salutations he send to their compatriots" (Dods, "Epistle to the Hebrews," 380-81).

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, 146, n.312.

¹⁰¹ Lane, *Hebrews*, 571. Emphasis added.

the "certain circles" that interpreted the verse as a greeting from within Italy, those circles include all extant scribal subscriptions prior to the sixteenth century. As far as I have been able to determine there is no evidence that other scribes or any other native Greek speaker from antiquity understood the greeting differently.

Indirect corroboration of the natural way 13:24 was understood in an earlier period is provided by Origen. According to Eusebius, Origen reported that some thought Clement of Rome wrote Hebrews (*HE* 6.25.14.). How could this belief have developed? As Origen reports this, it does not appear to be a tradition but an inference some made from an analysis of the epistle. What might the grounds for such an inference be? The first is the similarity between Hebrews and *1 Clement*. Rather than attribute this similarity to Clement's use of Hebrews, these ancient critics attributed it to common authorship. We must ask why they favored common authorship over Clement's use of a preexisting document. First, in those places where *1 Clement* parallels Hebrews, the author does not indicate that he is quoting or alluding to another work. The material is simply presented as his own. But this is unlikely to have been decisive since the same occurs with the use of Romans. The decisive factor must be that these early critics understood Hebrews 13:24 to imply that the epistle was sent from Rome. They therefore connected the epistle to the one early figure in the Roman church known for sending letters to other "Christian" communities. Once again we see that it was natural for those in far closer linguistic proximity than us to understand this greeting as reflecting the epistle's composition in Italy.

Hebrews 13:24 in the Context of Epistolary Greetings

Hebrews was produced as part of the distinctive epistolary literature of the early Christ-movement. A final factor that should be considered when determining the correct interpretation of Hebrews 13:24 is the tendencies that can be detected in other early "Christian" letters, particularly those of the New Testament and Ignatius. As with the subscriptional evidence, this too favors the idea that the Italians who sent greetings were located within Italy.

In the papyri writers occasionally convey greetings on behalf of individuals who are with him/her. This is also frequent in New Testament letters (1 Cor 16:19; Phil 4:22; Col 4:10-14; Titus 3:15; Phlm 23; 3 Jn 15). But one does not readily find examples in the papyri of greetings conveyed on behalf of a group of people identified by a geographical name (there may be examples but I surveyed nearly one hundred samples without finding any). This is what one might expect since there would be very few situations that would arise for an individual to have opportunity to do this. Early "Christian" letters, however, are different. They are often instruments of pastoral care sent by leaders in the Jesus-movement when they could not personally address the concerns and controversies of the various congregations. They were produced by people who had traveled widely as missionaries and teachers within these communities.¹⁰² Furthermore, as Bauckham notes, letters imply messengers whose presence created personal links between these communities. This "must have given even the most untraveled Christian a strong sense of participation

¹⁰² See the list of references in Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 33-35.

in something much broader than his or her local church."¹⁰³ Thus, it was natural for local Christ-followers to convey their greetings to the members of another congregation when someone in their midst was composing a letter to that congregation. So in addition to the numerous individuals mentioned in the greetings referred to above, we also find examples of entire communities conveying their greetings: the Asian churches greet the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 16:19); the Roman church (presumably) greets those in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Peter 5:13); the author of 2 John conveys the greeting of the church around him to the one he addresses (2 Jn 13).

In the early second century Ignatius continued the practice of conveying greetings from the members of one congregation to another. He conveys greetings from his companion Philo in his letter to the Smyrnaeans (*Ign. Smyr.* 13.1); he conveys the greetings of the Smyrnaeans and Ephesians to the Trallian congregation (*Ign. Tral.* 13.1); he greets the Philadelphians on behalf of the congregation in Troas (*Ign. Phil.* 11.2). One example is more similar to the greeting in Hebrews 13:24. Writing to the Magnesians, he added: Ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς Ἐφέσιοι ἀπὸ Σμύρνης ("The Ephesians greet you from Smyrna") (*Ign. Mag.* 15). These are not Ephesians who have taken residence in Smyrna but are now "away from" Smyrna. They were a delegation from the Ephesian church that had come to visit him while he stayed in Smyrna. In the greeting ἀπὸ Σμύρνης indicates the place *from which* the greeting was sent. This is made clear by the final phrase of the greeting: ὁθεν καὶ γράφω ὑμῖν ("from where I am writing you"). Similarly, when Ignatius writes to the Roman

¹⁰³ "For Whom?" 39.

church he does so ἀπὸ Σμύρνῃς with the assistance of the Ephesian delegation (Ign. *Rom.* 10:1). Smyrna is the place from which Ignatius writes.

Early "Christian" communities commonly conveyed greetings to other "Christian" communities when letters were being sent by someone in their midst. When the community sending the greeting is identified by a toponym it is usually clear that they and the author are at that location—Asia, Rome, Smyrna, Troas, etc.. In only one case are greetings conveyed by a group identified by a toponym who are not in that location, those sent by the Ephesian delegation that met Ignatius in Smyrna. But in that case it is clear that they normally resided in Ephesus (they were not expatriates). Ignatius even goes out of his way to mention that they were with him in Smyrna, dispelling any mistaken assumptions that might arise by simply conveying the greetings of Ephesians.

In this literary context Hebrews 13:24 looks like a typical greeting from one congregation of Christ-followers to another. The "those" from Italy could be either individual Italians or, more likely, the members of a number of congregations (cf. 1 Cor 16:19). The tendencies in the other epistolary greetings that have been surveyed here give no support to the idea that the greeting could be from Italian expatriates writing home. To the contrary, when set in the context of other epistolary greetings Hebrews 13:24 is most appropriately understood to be the greeting of Italian Christ-followers who were located in Italy when the epistle was composed.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the Roman hypothesis and the arguments cited in its favor. It began by showing that the most influential and most recent versions of the Roman hypothesis are predicated upon anachronistic assumptions about the Christ-movement and its place within Second Temple Judaism. But it was noted that there could nonetheless be good reason to believe that Hebrews was written to Rome. Thus, the arguments most commonly cited in favor of a Roman destination were examined. We found that each proves to be surprisingly weak when subjected to critical scrutiny. When it is properly evaluated the evidence cited in some of the these arguments actually points away from a Roman destination.

The argument based upon the greeting in Hebrews 13:24 has been among the strongest reason for conjecturing that Hebrews was written to Rome. But when critically evaluated both its grammatical and "logical" lines of reasoning are found wanting. When manuscript subscriptions based upon the phrase in question are examined it is observed that they consistently interpret the phrase to indicate the place *from which* the epistle was written. Here we see scribal intuitions about the real "natural" way to understand the Greek idiom. Origen's report that some speculated that the author may have been Clement of Rome verifies that the same tacit understanding of the phrase was found at an earlier period outside scribal circles. There seems to be no evidence that the phrase was ever read otherwise in antiquity. In this light assertions about the alleged ambiguity and obscurity of the phrase before us should be dismissed.¹⁰⁴ Hebrews 13:24b is rather clear evidence that Hebrews was

¹⁰⁴ Cf. BDF: Hebrews 13:24 "is ambiguous and obscure, since the place of origin of the letter is unknown" (p. 225, sec. 437). This is an odd explanation to find in a technical *grammar*.

written *from* someplace in Italy and not to any Italian destination. Thus, the argument most often cited as the strongest in favor of locating the original recipients in Rome turns out to decisively undermine the hypothesis. The ancient commentator Theodoretus was correct when he said of this verse: Ἐδειξε πόθεν γέγραφε τὴν Ἐπιστολὴν (PG 82.785). Indeed, from where the epistle was written *is* exhibited. The New Jerusalem Bible's rendering is justified: "God's holy people *in Italy* send you greetings" (emphasis added). The Roman hypothesis fails.

In 1931 Hans Windisch recognized that Hebrews 13:24 most likely referred to an Italian origination and was therefore sufficient reason for eliminating the Roman hypothesis from consideration.¹⁰⁵ He was one of the few critical scholars of the period to register dissent from the emerging consensus. He believed that the readers could have resided in any location where there was a large Greek-speaking community. But Windisch did not dissent from another view that had become an axiom for many: "nur eine Gemeinde ist ausgeschlossen, Jerusalem."¹⁰⁶ For many scholars it remains axiomatic that Jerusalem is the one location that can be confidently ruled out of consideration. But as the next chapter will show, this too is a consensus built without foundations.

¹⁰⁵ Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (HNT 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Siebeck], 1931), 127.

¹⁰⁶ Windisch, *Hebräerbrief*, 127.

Chapter Five

Hebrews and Palestinian 'Christianity': Where is the Problem?

Introduction

Contemporary scholarship on the core introductory issues related to Hebrews is stagnant. Yet, consensus has developed in favor of locating the recipients of the epistle in Rome. The scholarly consensus in favor of this hypothesis is broad and its adherents comprise an impressive list of scholars. But in the last chapter it was demonstrated that this consensus is entirely without warrant. There is no reason to believe that Hebrews was sent to Rome but every reason to believe that it was sent from a location within Italy. But to where was it sent?

If we are to follow the consensus of scholarship, any location can be considered except Jewish Palestine. Even the few scholars who are hesitant or even skeptical about the Roman hypothesis usually express their confidence that Hebrews was sent to a community in the Western Diaspora. The arguments against a Palestinian destination are thought to be even stronger than those in favor of Rome. This chapter will show that these arguments are no stronger than those examined in the last chapter. It will also show that the proper evaluation of some of the cited evidence actually lends a measure of support to the idea that the original readers resided in or near Jerusalem. This will be built upon in Chapters Seven through Nine.

The *Prima Facie* Case in Favor of Palestine/Jerusalem

If anecdotal evidence can be admitted, the great majority of readers informed about the New Testament who are not biblical scholars sense that there is something about the "feel" and argument of the Hebrews that continues to make good sense if it were addressed to a community in Palestine either before or shortly after the destruction of the Temple. To them a Palestinian destination is intuitively likely. However, upon closer study they learn that the general consensus of scholarship from across the theological spectrum is firmly against this. The commentaries rehearse a handful of objections that we are told firmly rule out a Palestinian destination. In this light informed readers, students and young New Testament scholars usually allow their intuitions to be tutored and they learn to read Hebrews differently. Even established scholars will sometimes acknowledge the appeal of a Palestinian destination prior to rehearsing the arguments that supposedly rule it out. Markus Bockmuehl provides a recent example:

The substance of Hebrews does *at first sight* appear easily compatible with a Jewish Christian readership, *if not necessarily tied to a particular Palestinian location....* In a context of growing Jewish nationalism before 70 or rabbinic consolation after 70, it is easy to see how a writer might have wanted to strengthen Jewish Christian readers' loyalty to the new faith and assurance about the all-sufficiency of the atonement accomplished in Christ.¹

Following this comment Bockmuehl rehearses some of the arguments against a Palestinian destination.² He later goes on to say that the most likely scenario is that the epistle was written to one of several house churches in Rome. The only reason listed in support is that there is similarity between the high priestly Christology of

¹ Markus Bockmuehl, "The Church in Hebrews," in *A Vision for the Church* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Micahel B. Thompson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 135. Emphasis added.

² Bockmuehl, "Church in Hebrews," 135-37.

Hebrews and 1 Clement 36.³ Bockmuehl alerts readers that he will discuss some of his assumptions about Hebrews' background without giving an account for them, so he should not be faulted for simply asserting his support of the Roman hypothesis.⁴ But it is instructive that he felt the need to offer reasons why Palestine should be ruled out. As his own comments illustrate, a simple reading of Hebrews is sufficient for a *prima facie* case in favor of a Palestinian destination. Presumably Bockmuehl felt the need to argue against this position because he anticipated that the intuitions of some readers would need to be tutored. In contrast, Hebrews specialists spend a decreasing amount of space rehearsing difficulties with a Palestinian destination, as if it is obvious that Hebrews could not have possibly been written to a Palestinian community.⁵

Objections Against Locating the Recipients in Jerusalem/Palestine

Numerous objections are found in the literature against locating the recipients in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Jewish Palestine. Most of them are intended specifically to rule out a Jerusalem destination, the position that will be argued for later. (For this reason statements will no longer be regularly qualified by adding "or elsewhere in Jewish Palestine.") The most common objections can be summarized as follows:⁶

³ Bockmuehl, "Church in Hebrews," 137.

⁴ Bockmuehl, "Church in Hebrews," 133.

⁵ For example, this option is mentioned in a single sentence by Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermania; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 9. It is mentioned only in passing by William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols., WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991), lviii. Neither commentator offers criticism of the position. Other recent commentators do not even feel obliged to mention the position, e.g., Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 76-78; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 19-22; Gareth L. Cockerill, *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999), 15-18.

⁶ The following list is compiled from numerous sources. For representative examples of most of these objections, see Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909, 2:341-44; A.S. Peake *Hebrews* (The Century Bible; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 22-24; Gerhardus Vos,

1. The language of Hebrews is incompatible with a Palestinian destination. Hebrews was written in fine, almost literary Greek. The author of Hebrews depends exclusively on the LXX for his citations of the Old Testament and demonstrates no knowledge of either the Hebrew text or Aramaic *targumîm*. The language of Palestine, however, was Aramaic.
2. Hebrews reflects the outlook of Hellenistic Judaism and is incompatible with a Jerusalem destination.
3. Hebrews was written to a second-generation congregation that is described in ways that could not be said of the Jerusalem church.
4. The recipients of Hebrews are commended for their generosity to the "saints" (6:10). Yet, we know from Acts and the Pauline letters that the Jerusalem church was one of great poverty. Further, the use of the term "saints" in this context may indicate that the recipients of the letter had participated in the collection of funds for the Jerusalem church since "saints" is sometimes used as a technical term for Jerusalem Christians.
5. The description of persecution in Hebrews 10:32-34 does not correspond to the persecution experienced by the Jerusalem church as described in the book of Acts. In particular, the recipients of Hebrews had not yet suffered to the point of shedding blood, i.e. martyrdom. But we know that several people in the Jerusalem church had been martyred (Acts 7:59; 12:1; 26:10; Josephus, *A.J.* 20.200).
6. The persuasive thrust of Hebrews does not fit with what is known about the worship of the Jerusalem Christians.
7. Hebrews does not speak of returning to Judaism.
8. Hebrews never once explicitly mentions the Temple and seems to have no firsthand knowledge of the practices of the cultus. Rather, the author's knowledge of the cultus comes exclusively from the Pentateuch and his concern is solely with the tabernacle. He is not interested in contemporary realities whether the Temple is standing or not.
9. People in Jerusalem would not have been acquainted with Timothy.

The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 12-15 and Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 696-97. Alfred Wikenhauser raises an additional objection that was once common but declined with Pauline authorship. According to him, if Paul wrote Hebrews then it could not have been written to Palestine because it would have been too dangerous for Paul to consider returning there (cf. 13:23) (*New Testament Introduction* [Dublin: Herder and Herder, 1967], 463). A similar objection is that the Jerusalem church would not have received a letter from the Apostle to the Gentiles. However, if Paul had written Hebrews, neither of these points would preclude a Jerusalem destination. But these and related objections will not be addressed here since so few consider Pauline authorship a serious possibility.

Many contemporary scholars would agree with Kümmel when on the basis of such arguments he says that "it is *certain* that the letter was not addressed to Jerusalem."⁷ Such certainty is misplaced. We have already seen that the arguments in favor of locating the recipients in Rome are uniformly weak; the same is true of these objections. Though some points could be elaborated much further, assessment of these objections will be kept brief.⁸ Nevertheless, it should be sufficient to show that some of the most often cited objections have been rendered unsound by advances made in the understanding of first-century Palestinian Jewish society. The fact that they continue to be cited by those who write on Hebrews is not an indication of their merits but of the insular nature of contemporary Hebrews scholarship. The positive argument presented in subsequent chapters should be sufficient to outweigh any remaining difficulties that might be seen for locating the recipients in Palestine.

The Hellenistic Character of Hebrews, Greek and Use of the LXX

The first two items on the list are really aspects of the same objection and can be conveniently addressed together. Donald Hagner states the objection broadly when he says that the primary weakness of the Jerusalem hypothesis "is the strongly Hellenistic character of the book, which does not fit well with, for example, a Jerusalem readership."⁹ This "Hellenistic character" consists of the language in which the epistle was written, the version of Israel's scriptures to which the author appeals

⁷ Werner George Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; trans. Howard Clark Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 399. Emphasis mine.

⁸ Many of the following objections presuppose the reliability of information about the Jerusalem church found in Acts. The easy way to evade these objections would be to cast doubt on the historical veracity of this information. However, for the sake of argument I will likewise assume that the information about the Jerusalem church conveyed in Acts is generally reliable and show that these objections nonetheless fail.

⁹ Donald Hagner, *Hebrews* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 6.

and the thought forms he employs. Over the course of the last century objections of this sort have been the most often cited against locating the readers in Jewish Palestine.

Here are a handful of representative examples of the objection. Peake states that it is very unlikely "that a writer, who sustained such a relation to the church in Jerusalem as the author sustained to the church which he addresses, should have written to it in Greek rather than Aramaic, and based his arguments on the LXX."¹⁰ Wilson says that one of the major difficulties for views like Westcott's "is the fact that the letter is written in Greek, and that its argument from the Old Testament sometimes depends on LXX readings. This is certainly hard to explain if the letter was written to Jerusalem."¹¹ More recently Raymond Brown states the objection by asking: "Why would the author compose in elegant *Greek* a dissuasive... to Jewish Christians of Judea for whom Hebrew and Aramaic would have been a native language?"¹² In the most recently published major commentary on Hebrews Craig Koester continues to list this objection when he says that "it seems unlikely that the author would have written to people in Jerusalem in an elegant Greek style, basing his arguments on the LXX, even where the LXX differs from the MT."¹³ McNeile is representative in his statement of the related objection: "If the readers... were Jewish

¹⁰ Peake, *Hebrews*, 24.

¹¹ R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 10.

¹² Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 699. Emphasis in original.

¹³ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 49. Of course, no one in Jerusalem had the Masoretic Text (MT). Koester means to refer to "Hebrew texts."

Christians of a markedly Hellenistic type, the epistle can hardly have been written to any town in Palestine, least of all Jerusalem."¹⁴

It is surprising to see contemporary scholars continue to raise these objections.¹⁵ Our knowledge of first-century Palestine has increased dramatically since the late nineteenth century when they began to be raised. In light of this increased knowledge such objections carry no force; it is doubtful they ever did.

The distinction between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism upon which these objections depend is untenable. The most detailed demonstration of this is Martin Hengel's massive and masterful *Judaism and Hellenism*.¹⁶ Hengel showed that Jewish Palestine had been significantly Hellenized in language, education, culture and even thought by the time of the New Testament. Though a mainstay of much New Testament scholarship at the time he wrote, his careful studies demonstrated that it was inappropriate to think of Diaspora Judaism as "Hellenistic Judaism" and Palestinian Judaism as un-Hellenized. There has been debate about whether Palestine was Hellenized to the extent that Hengel claims.¹⁷ Few, however, would dispute that Hengel has successfully shown that one can no longer talk of Palestinian

¹⁴ A.H. McNeile, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; rev. by C.S.C. Williams; Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 233.

¹⁵ It is worth noting that there is deep irony in the fact that proponents of the Roman hypothesis cite the Greek of Hebrews as an objection against a Palestinian destination. After all, one could just as easily make the same objection against locating the recipients in Rome. After all, Latin was the native language of the city. But it would not be a good argument because Rome, like Jerusalem, contained a sizable minority that were bi-lingual and even exclusively Greek-speaking.

¹⁶ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; 2 vols.; London: SCM and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1974).

¹⁷ A number of scholars dispute various points of Hengel's work but very few have rejected Hengel's thesis outright. The main scholar to do so is Louis Feldman. For his most recent critique see Louis H. Feldman, "How Much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?" *JSJ* 33/3 (2002): 290-313. Feldman's earlier critiques are briefly criticized and his total rejection of Hengel's thesis is judged unjustified in Lester L. Grabbe, "The Jews and Hellenization: Hengel and His Critics," in *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture* (ed. Philip R. Davies and John M. Halligan; JSOTSup 340; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 54-55.

Judaism *versus* Hellenistic Judaism, as if the former were not also Hellenized to varying degrees.¹⁸

With respect to the languages that were spoken, a number of studies have confirmed Hengel's basic contention that Greek was widely used. It is now generally recognized that first-century Palestine was multilingual. James Barr, for instance, concludes his study by saying "many people, then, were bilingual or trilingual, and the whole linguistic situation of Palestine was characterized by his fact."¹⁹ Joseph Fitzmyer's study concluded with the statement:

I should maintain that the most commonly used language of Palestine in the first century A.D. was Aramaic, but that many Palestinian Jews, not only those of the Hellenistic towns, but farmers and craftsmen of less obviously Hellenized areas used Greek, at least as a second language. The data collected from Greek inscriptions and literary sources indicate that Greek was widely used. In fact, there is indication, despite Josephus' testimony, *that some Palestinians spoke only Greek, the Ἑλληνισταί.*²⁰

Pieter W. van der Horst concluded his recent survey of the epigraphic evidence similarly. He states that "the burden of proof is on the shoulders of those scholars who want to maintain that Greek was not the *lingua franca* of many Palestinian Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman-Byzantine period in view of the fact that more than 50%, maybe even some 65% of the public inscriptions is in 'the language of Japheth.'"²¹ Furthermore, he tentatively concludes that "Roman Palestine was a largely bilingual, or even trilingual, society — alongside the vernacular Aramaic (and,

¹⁸ Cf. Grabbe, "Jews and Hellenization," 64.

¹⁹ James Barr, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (ed. W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2:113.

²⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *CBQ* 32 (1970): 531. Emphasis added.

²¹ Pieter W. van der Horst, *Japheth in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity* (Leuven: Peters, 2002), 25-26.

to a much lesser extent, Hebrew) Greek was widely used and understood."²² Of course, this must be qualified by the fact that degree of use and understanding would have varied widely according to location, time period, social status, educational background and the degree to which one's profession made knowledge of Greek advantageous. But in urban centers, among certain kinds of craftsmen or tradesmen and in areas near the borders of Jewish Palestine it would not have been unusual to find a significant number of individuals who knew Greek as a second language, and some as a first language.

In addition to the general linguistic situation of Palestine it should also be remembered that the Jesus-movement was bilingual from the beginning. Jesus himself seems to have known some Greek (see below). How he learned the language is unknown, though opportunity would have been readily available if he spent much time in towns near Nazareth such as Sepphoris and Tiberias. He would also have had some opportunity to use the language in his craft as a carpenter working for people in the upper socio-economic classes who very likely knew Greek. We do not know the makeup of Jesus' clientele prior to his itinerant ministry. However, at numerous places in the gospels Jesus is portrayed as interacting with wealthier people, even receiving the patronage of some wealthy women (Luke 8:2-3). According to Fiensy this "suggests some experience in similar social situations and an earlier association with people of some economic means. Further, given the common urban snobbery toward village peasants, one may reasonably wonder if a simple

²² Horst, *Japheth*, 26.

village carpenter would ever be the guest of such people."²³ It is more likely that Jesus was, in Fiensy's description, an "itinerant artisan who had experience in urban environments working for wealthy patrons."²⁴

Regardless of how Jesus learned the language or precisely how proficient he was, at several points the gospels presuppose that he could at least hold a limited conversation in Greek. This is clearest when they describe his interaction with the centurion from Capernaum (Matt 8:5-13), Pilate (Matt 27: 11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-38) and the Syro-Phonecian woman (Mark 7:24-30; Matt 15:21-28). It is possible that translators were used with the centurion since the parallel account in Luke 7:1-10 has him sending Jewish elders and some of his friends to speak to Jesus on his behalf, but Luke's account does not preclude Jesus also speaking to the centurion directly as Matthew describes. It is also possible that there was an interpreter present when Pilate interrogated Jesus, though none is mentioned. But Jesus' interaction with the Syro-Phonecian woman is more difficult to explain away. The setting of the story is outside the land of Israel in an area where we would expect either Greek or Phonecian to be used. Matthew's account refers to the woman as a γυνὴ Χαναναία (15:22) while Mark refers to her as an Ἑλληνίς (7:26). These are not necessarily contradictory descriptions. Mark's term is most likely intended to indicate that she was a Greek-speaking Gentile, not that was a Greek. In both versions of the story Jesus is described as conversing with her without any room for someone to mediate as translator. From these and other passages it is reasonable to

²³ D.A. Fiensy, "Jesus' Socioeconomic Background," in *Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Religious Figures* (ed. James H. Charlesworth and Loren L. Johns; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 252.

²⁴ Fiensy, "Socioeconomic Background," 252, cf. 245-51.

conclude with Stanley Porter that Jesus definitely knew Greek and used it at various times in his itinerant ministry.²⁵

The earliest followers of Jesus included individuals who were at least bilingual. Philip and Andrew, two of Jesus' original disciples, bore Greek names and appear to have spoken the language (cf. John 12:20-22). Another, Levi, was a tax collector who almost certainly used Greek in his business interactions with government officials. The same applies to Zaccheus, a wealthy chief tax-collector in Jericho (Luke 19:1-10).²⁶ A female disciple named Joanna was the wife of an official in the court of Antipas (Luke 8:3). It is almost certain that a court official would have known Greek for administrative and diplomatic purposes. It does not follow that his wife would have known the language, but it is likely, especially because knowledge of the language was a sign of status and culture among the upper classes.

The linguistic argument against a Palestinian destination for Hebrews is paralleled by arguments that the epistle of James could not have been written by James the brother of Jesus. Since Dibelius, one of the chief arguments against Jamesian authorship has been the assertion that a Palestinian Jew like James could not be responsible for a letter written in accomplished Greek which includes features that are allegedly more characteristic of Hellenistic than Palestinian Jewish thought. However, J.N. Sevenster's detailed study concluded, among other things, that "in view of all the data made available in the past decades the possibility can no longer

²⁵ Stanley Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (ed. B. Chilton and C.A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 123-54; idem, "Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek? A Look at Scholarly Opinion and the Evidence," in Porter, *Studies in the Greek New Testament: theory and practice* (SBG 6; New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 139-71.

²⁶ There is reason to believe that Levi and/or Zaccheus may have later been among the elders of the Jerusalem church under James. See Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 70-76.

be precluded that a Palestinian Jewish Christian of the first century A.D. wrote an epistle in good Greek."²⁷ In light of the hard linguistic evidence some recent commentators have returned to the notion that the epistle bearing his name could have been written by James the brother of Jesus. One prominent scholar to do so is Luke Timothy Johnson. In Johnson's words, "the entire thrust of recent research has been to demonstrate how pervasive and long-standing was the Hellenization of Palestine, shown above all by the use of the Greek language."²⁸ He further notes that "there is also the strong likelihood that the first Christian community in Jerusalem was itself at least bilingual if not exclusively Greek-speaking from the beginning. There is, in short, no linguistic reason why James of Jerusalem could not have written this letter."²⁹ Johnson overstates the point when he says that the Jerusalem church may have been *exclusively* Greek-speaking, but the basic point remains. Richard Bauckham is more balanced when he similarly writes, "What can no longer be argued is that a work shows such proficiency in Greek and such acquaintance with Hellenistic culture that a Palestinian Jew could not have written it."³⁰

At some time in the past the author of Hebrews seems to have been part of the community to which he writes. As with James, one can no longer assume that Hebrews could not have been written by a Palestinian Jew because of its Greek and familiarity with Hellenistic thought. In light of Hengel's work, there is no reason to rule out the possibility that a Jerusalem native could have received a Greek education

²⁷ J.N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?* (NovTSup 19; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 191.

²⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 117.

²⁹ Johnson, *James*, 117-18.

³⁰ Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, disciple of Jesus the sage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 22.

and become an accomplished writer, particularly if he was from a wealthier family.³¹ But a former member of the Jerusalem church would not need to be a Jerusalem native. Many Diaspora-born Jews lived in Jerusalem and we know that a sizeable portion of the earliest Jerusalem church and its leadership came from among these "Hellenists" (Acts 2:5-13 & 41; 4:36; 6:1-6; 21:15-16). Contrary to common assertions, they were not all permanently expelled, as will be shown shortly. Thus there is no linguistic reason why Hebrews could not have been written to members of the Jerusalem church.

Some writers acknowledge the possibility that people in Palestine could have been bilingual but nonetheless believe that the elegant style of Hebrews counts against a Jerusalem destination. For example, Jülicher states: "Even though Greek may have been understood in Palestine, it would still have been scarcely suitable to address an epistle written in the most polished Greek to the Jewish Christian community of Jerusalem."³² According to Goodspeed, the author's "polished Greek style would be a strange vehicle for a message to Aramaic-speaking Jews or Christians of Jewish blood."³³ Schierse's objection is similar: Hebrews "displays a high degree of stylistic elegance and literary ability. Consequently, it could not have been destined for the Jewish-Christians of Palestine, even if most of them were, in fact, bilingual."³⁴ These are bizarre assertions. Why would it be unsuitable to send a well-written

³¹ See Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 65-106. The early church in Jerusalem appears to have been fairly representative of the city's population and included well-to-do members. See David A. Fiensy, "The Composition of the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*; ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 226-30.

³² Adolf Jülicher, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Janet Penrose Ward; London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1904), 162.

³³ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 258. Emphasis added.

³⁴ F.J. Schierse, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in F.J. Schierse, et. al., *The Epistles to the Hebrews, of St James, and to the Thessalonians* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1977), xi.

Greek letter to bilingual people in Palestine? Or to "Christians of Jewish blood" generally? Are we really meant to believe that it would not be problematic if a letter written in poor Greek were written to Jerusalem? This is like acknowledging that many people in Los Angeles are bilingual and can speak Spanish and therefore it is possible that a letter written in Spanish could have been sent there—provided that it was not written with a high degree of elegance and style. In any case, the readers' competence in Greek would not have had to equal the author's for it to be a reasonable proposition that Hebrews was sent to Jerusalem. They only had to know Greek well-enough to understand the letter. Arguably anyone with a basic handle on the language could do this.

It has occasionally been suggested that by the time Hebrews was written the Jerusalem church was comprised only of people who spoke Aramaic as a first language. If true, then this would lessen the likelihood that a letter written in Greek would have been sent to members of the Jerusalem church. The basis for this objection is the persecution of the Jerusalem church after the death of Stephen in which "all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1).³⁵ Later Luke indicates that those scattered by this persecution traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (11:19). Those who see this indicating that the Hellenist component of the Jerusalem church ceased to exist have not read the text closely enough. When Acts 8:1 says that "all" (πάντες) but the apostles were scattered, it is not saying that all Christ-followers in the city were scattered except the Twelve. Otherwise there would have been no believers in

³⁵ Sometimes this objection is cited against a Palestinian destination generally, but that clearly cannot be sustained since those who are scattered are said to have gone into other parts of Judea and Samaria.

Jerusalem in addition to the Twelve, something Acts does not envision (e.g., 11:1).³⁶

Nor is it saying that all the Hellenists were driven from the city. The text says nothing to indicate this, though it is likely that Hellenists were the primary targets of Saul's persecution. Nevertheless, Acts 11:19 implies those scattered by the persecution were evangelists and it is doubtful that one could describe *all* the Hellenists as such. Rather, when Acts 8:1 says that all but the apostles were scattered, it can only mean that all the leadership of the church except the apostles were scattered, at least permanently. In the context of the narrative the primary reference is to the seven Hellenist deacons. But even if a sizeable portion of the Hellenist component of the church beyond its leadership had been scattered, why assume that *no* Hellenists would have returned to Jerusalem after Saul's attacks ended?³⁷ In addition, even if most of them were scattered never to return, why assume that there would have been no further Hellenist converts to the Christ-movement? There were, after all, a considerable number of non-Christian Hellenists in the city from which the apostles could evangelize. And since some of the apostles were bi-lingual, there is no reason to suppose they would not have.

³⁶ Richard Bauckham is correct to say that the "all" of Acts 8:1 is hyperbolic ("James and the Jerusalem Church," in *Palestinian Setting* [ed. Bauckham], 429). He bases this on Acts 8:3 which describes Saul's ravaging of the church; if literally all had left there would have been no one for Saul to persecute. However, this verse does not indicate that others besides the apostles were left in Jerusalem after the persecution following Stephen's death. Saul's ravaging of the church is the persecution that followed Stephen's death, not a separate event. Acts 8:3 describes the instrumental cause of the scattering and is thus contemporaneous with it.

³⁷ Luke does not mention the return of anyone who left Jerusalem during Saul's persecution. Martin Hengel (*Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979], 74) takes this silence as indicating that only Greek-speaking believers were affected and that they all left never to return. This reads far too much into Luke's silence. After Saul's conversion the main focus of Acts shifts from the Jerusalem church to Saul/Paul and his ministry. Any return of dispersed members of the church would have occurred in the months and years following Saul's conversion, precisely at the point that Luke's attention moves away from the Jerusalem church. Thus, there is no reason to expect Luke to tell us about anyone who may have returned.

Hengel calculates the Greek (including a few Latin) ossuary inscriptions in Jerusalem and its environs to be 39% of the total. Working on the assumption that it would make sense for ossuaries to be inscribed in Greek only in cases in which the dead or their family used Greek in the vernacular, he estimates the proportion of the population of greater Jerusalem to be 10-20% Greek-speaking.³⁸ For a population of 80,000 inhabitants this would entail a population of Greek-speaking Jews between 8,000-16,000. However, this figure is probably too low. Reinhardt has carefully reexamined the issue of Jerusalem's population and considers it is probable that it was up to 100-120,000 inhabitants during the forties C.E..³⁹ This would mean that the number of Greek-speaking Jews who lived in the city (in distinction from pilgrims) was no less than 10,000 and possibly as large as 24,000. Even if only one or two percent of this population became Christ-followers in the decades following Stephen's death, this would be more than sufficient to make Jerusalem a plausible destination for a letter like Hebrews.

There is a third possible source of Greek-speaking Christ-followers in the Jerusalem church after the death of Stephen. The Jerusalem church was the mother church of the Christ-movement.⁴⁰ It was located near where many of the events in Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection occurred. It is not implausible that there were a few Christ-followers from the Western Diaspora who would have made

³⁸ Martin Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea in the First Century After Christ* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 10.

³⁹ Wolfgang Reinhardt, "The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church," in *Palestinian Setting* (ed. Bauckham), 237-65.

⁴⁰ In his "Jerusalem Imagined: Rethinking Earliest Christian Claims to the Hebrew Epic" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1999) Milton C. Moreland has argued that Jerusalem was not a significant center of the Christ-movement prior to 70 C.E.. The radical skepticism driving his study is unwarranted and this conclusion cannot be taken seriously as the product of responsible historical inquiry.

pilgrimage or even permanently resettled in Jerusalem to be with this body of believers. Such people may have wanted to be near the places where the events occurred and see the sights (but probably not to venerate them as in later times). They may have wanted to hear the stories from eyewitnesses of the events. They may have wanted to sit under the teaching of the Apostles or relatives of Jesus. Even more likely is the possibility that some Christ-followers from the Diaspora would have moved to Jerusalem because of the eschatological significance of Zion. Early members of the Jesus-movement were eager to see the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6). Old Testament passages that were understood messianically gave reason to believe that the Diaspora would be regathered to Zion preceding or attending the establishment of a messianic kingdom (e.g., Isa 11:10-12:6; 40:9-11; 45:5-6; Jer 23:3-4; 31:10-12; Ezek 34:11-31). "The important organising concept of the Zion traditions [in the Old Testament]," writes Tan, "is that Yahweh has chosen to dwell in Jerusalem and exercise his kingship in and through the city."⁴¹ Given the belief that the kingdom had in some sense arrived in the person of Jesus and would be consummated at his return, it would have been natural for Christ-followers in the Diaspora who had the means to emigrate to Jerusalem as they awaited the consummation of the kingdom. Despite the problems with other elements of his reconstruction, Buchanan was not unreasonable when he suggested that the original recipients of Hebrews may have been Christ-followers from the Diaspora who had moved to Jerusalem precisely for this reason.⁴² Gentile converts could also have been attracted to moving since some texts predict an eschatological pilgrimage of Gentiles

⁴¹ Kim Huat Tan, *The Zion traditions and the Aims of Jesus* (SNTSMS 91; Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), 30; cf. pp. 25-48.

⁴² George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (AB 36; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 258-60.

to Zion for the purpose of worshipping Yahweh (e.g., Isa 2:2-4; 60:1-14; 66:18-23; Zech 8:22-23; Tob 14:5-7).

It cannot be maintained that there were no Greek-speaking members of the Jerusalem church after the death of Stephen. Contrary to common assumptions, Acts does not suggest that literally every Hellenist believer fled the city never to return. Even if it did, there was a sizeable Hellenist population in the city and it is most likely that converts would have continued to be drawn from this part of the populace. There is also reason to believe that some converts to the Jesus-movement in the Diaspora would have found the idea of moving to Jerusalem attractive, allowing them to participate in eschatological events in a concrete way. Though we do not know for certain that any did in fact move for such reasons, it is possible that at least a few who were financially well-off did. Whatever the reason, Acts indicates that there were still Hellenists associated with the Jerusalem church in the late 50s when Paul returned to the city and stayed in the home of Mnason, an apparently wealthy Cypriot Jew (21:16). Luke specifies that Mnason had been a disciple since the beginning of the movement (ἀρχαίῳ μαθητῇ), indicating that he had either never moved away from the Jerusalem area or had returned after the persecutions of Saul subsided. Even if exclusively Greek-speaking members were a minority, Greek would be the language we would expect for someone to use in a letter addressed to the community.

As for the objection that Hebrews employs the Septuagint/Old Greek this cannot be taken seriously. The famous Theodotus synagogue inscription discovered in 1913 attests the presence of a large synagogue complex for Hellenists in Jerusalem

before 70 C.E.⁴³ Chief among the purposes of the synagogue were "reading of the Law and teaching of the commandments" (εἰς ἀν[άγ]νωσ[ιν] νόμου καὶ εἰς [δ]ιδασκαλίαν ἐντολῶν) (CIJ 2.1404, 4-5). It also had rooms for those visiting from foreign places. There can be no doubt that the Law was read and expounded in this synagogue in Greek translation. The presence of Greek-speaking synagogues in Jerusalem is corroborated by Acts 6:9 which indicates that there was a Hellenistic synagogue of the Freedmen and possibly several other synagogues for Diaspora Jews who had moved to Jerusalem.⁴⁴ The synagogue of the Freedmen may be the same as the synagogue of Theodotus, though that identification is not as certain as scholars sometimes insinuate. Whether Acts 6:9 indicates the presence of more than one Greek-speaking synagogue or not, the number of Greek-speaking Jews resident in Jerusalem almost demands that there were several more. The LXX/OG would have been used in each of these synagogues. Martin Hengel suggests that even the

⁴³ The dating has sometimes been disputed but recent studies have convincingly shown that the inscription attests to a synagogue building in Jerusalem that was probably constructed in the early first century C.E.. See Rainer Riesner, "Synagogues in Jerusalem," in *Palestinian Setting* (ed. Bauckham), 192-200 and, especially, John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, "Dating Theodotus (CIJ II 1404)," *JJS* 51/2 (2000): 243-77.

⁴⁴ The wording of the verse has been taken to refer to anywhere between one and five synagogues. A single synagogue of the "Freedmen" shared by Cyrenaeans, Alexandrians, Cilicians and Asians is preferred by several scholars, e.g., F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1951), 156; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1969), 66, 69, 71; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (ed. Conrad H. Gempf; WUNT 49; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Siebeck], 1989), 176; C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles 1-14* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 324; Riesner, "Synagogues," 204-205. Alternatively, the genitives in the series Κυρηναίων καὶ Ἀλεξανδρέων καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ Κιλικίας καὶ Ἀσίας could simply refer to groups of Diaspora Jews in addition to those in the synagogue of the Freedmen. It seems more likely to me, however, that these genitives are meant to each modify an implicit τῆς συναγωγῆς. But even if the previous alternative is correct, we might nonetheless infer from the fact that these people formed identifiable groups that each group had its own synagogue(s). Something analogous happens in the Muslim communities of many Western nations. Even when denominational differences are not an issue, Muslim immigrants who all speak Arabic as a first language do not necessarily join together in the same mosques. Rather, a city may have one Arabic-language mosque whose members are predominantly Egyptian and others whose members are mostly Moroccan, Jordanian, etc.. Similarly, in the United States Spanish-language churches in the same city and even within the same denomination will often be comprised of members who are predominantly Cuban, Mexican, El Salvadoran, etc.. Common language and common religion do not always equate to common culture.

Pharisees may have employed the Septuagint in an effort to make their understanding of the Law known to the festival pilgrims from the Diaspora.⁴⁵

Whether Hengel is right on this last point or not, there is ample evidence that Greek translations of the OT were used even in communities that were generally conservative regarding language. Copies of Greek translations of the Old Testament and related material were found at Qumran. These include copies of Exodus (7Q1), Leviticus (4Q119, 4Q120), Numbers (4Q121), Deuteronomy (4Q122), parabiblical material related to Exodus (4Q127) and the Epistle of Jeremiah (7Q2). Several unidentified fragments (7Q3-18) were also found that are likely to be fragments from Greek translations of the Old Testament.⁴⁶ Additionally a Greek copy of the 12 Minor Prophets was found at Nahal Hever (8Hev 1).

Portions of thirteen manuscript copies of the LXX/OG dated to the first-century C.E. or earlier have been identified. Eight of these were discovered in Palestine.⁴⁷ Greek translations of the scriptures of Israel were used in Jewish Palestine alongside Hebrew versions and Aramaic *targumîm* and considered authoritative. The fact that Hebrews consistently utilizes the LXX/OG is not the least bit detrimental to the possibility that the epistle was sent to a location in Jewish Palestine.

A final aspect of this objection is related to the author's allegedly "Hellenistic" thought. As mentioned earlier, at one time it was common for scholars to make much of the perceived similarities Hebrews bears with Philo's metaphysics and

⁴⁵ 'Hellenization' of Judea, 13.

⁴⁶ So Emmanuel Tov, "A Categorized List of all the 'Biblical Texts' Found in the Judean Desert," *DSD* 8/1 (2001): 79.

⁴⁷ The others were apparently all found in Egypt. They are PRyl 458, PFouad 266a, PFouad 266b, PFouad 266c, POxy 3522.

exegesis.⁴⁸ On this basis it has often been maintained that there is "obvious contact between Heb[rews] and the Spirit of Alexandrian Judaism, especially with Philo."⁴⁹ Most recently Kenneth Schenck has maintained that the similarities "are significant enough to conclude that Philo and the author of Hebrews come from common backgrounds."⁵⁰ Käsemann and a few others have additionally claimed to find connections between the thought patterns of Hebrews and pre-Christian Gnostic conceptions.⁵¹ Other scholars speak simply of the thought patterns or intellectual milieu of educated Hellenistic Judaism that influenced the author. The alleged "Alexandrian" character of Hebrews has often been overstated while the theory of Gnostic connections is bedeviled by debilitating problems.⁵² These difficulties need not detain us here. Even if these claims were granted this would pose no difficulty for a Jerusalem destination.

It is not always clear whether the problem is supposed to be that someone with a robust Hellenistic background would not have had a relationship with members of the Jerusalem church, or whether Christ-followers in Jerusalem would find the Hellenism of Hebrews incomprehensible. In either case it is difficult to know

⁴⁸ The most recent catalogue of similarities is found in Kenneth L. Schenck, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study After Thirty Years," *SPhil* 14 (2002): 112-35.

⁴⁹ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 395. For an overview of the discussion, see L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7-42 and Jeremy Punt, "Hebrews, thought-patterns and context: Aspects of the background of Hebrews," *Neot* 31/1 (1997): 125-34.

⁵⁰ Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 30.

⁵¹ Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* (trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984; German original: 1939); Eric Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1965); Gerd Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1969); Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress and Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 274-76. Hurst observes that with only a few exceptions this approach has made little impact on responsible interpretation of Hebrews (*Background of Thought*, 74).

⁵² The claims of Schenck, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews," are more modest than most but still overstated. On the alleged parallels with Gnostic thought, see Hurst, *Background of Thought*, 67-75.

what force the objection could possibly have. We know that there were many contacts between Jews of Palestine and Alexandria (as well as other Diaspora locations).⁵³ According to Acts 6:9 there were enough Alexandrians living in Jerusalem to be an identifiable group who most likely had their own synagogue. The presence of Alexandrians in Jerusalem is confirmed by ossuary, inscriptional and rabbinic evidence.⁵⁴

The evidence suggests that Palestine could have produced Hellenistic intellectuals like Philo of Alexandria. It didn't, but neither did any other location in the Diaspora.⁵⁵ Alternatively, Jerusalem could have become the home of a Hellenistic intellectual like Philo. So even if the author of Hebrews was the "Alexandrian" some maintain he was, there is no reason why he could not have been associated with the Jerusalem church at some point. Nor is there any reason to believe that such a person could not be pastorally concerned for members within that church and write an exhortative epistle to them.

Writing prior to Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism*, Sandmel had already pointed out that the adjective "Hellenistic Jewish" is ambiguous and does not tell us much. "When we describe something as hellenistic, are we speaking about the language in which an idea is expressed, or are we alluding to some demonstrable difference between a Jewish and a Greek idea?" If language is in view, then this is problematic since "a Greek idea could receive expression in mishnaic or Qumran Hebrew, and a

⁵³ For an overview see S. Safrai, "Relations between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; 2 vols.; CRINT; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), 1.184-215.

⁵⁴ For references and discussion, see Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?* 146, 148 and Fiensy, "Composition," 233-34. Funerary inscriptions for Diaspora Jews indicate the presence of Jews from many places but Alexandria is the most frequently named.

⁵⁵ Bauckham, *James*, 22.

Jewish idea in koine Greek." If the term is used merely to describe the geography of writing this too is problematic since "a work written in Greek could have been composed on Palestinian soil, or one written in Hebrew or Aramaic in the Greek dispersion." Sandmel granted that language and ideational content can point to the probability of a document's place or origin but insisted that "we go too far when we move from the probability to a predetermined inference."⁵⁶ The same point applies to destination. Scholars are badly mistaken when they infer that a "Hellenistic" document like Hebrews must have been sent to a location in the Western Diaspora. A "Hellenistic" document could have been sent *from* Palestine; Hebrews could have just as easily been sent *to* Palestine.

Second Generation

The second objection against locating the recipients in Jerusalem is the claim that Hebrews 2:3 indicates that the readers were second-generation Christians. The relevant phrase says that the message of salvation was first declared by Jesus and "was attested to us by those who heard [him]" (ὕπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐβεβαιώθη). This indicates that the recipients had no direct knowledge of Jesus but were evangelized by people who had. The argument is that there were many in the Jerusalem church who had firsthand acquaintance with Jesus, thus Hebrews could not have been written to Jerusalem. Sometimes a related objection is raised based on 5:12 where the author says his readers ought to be able to instruct others but instead are still in need of basic instruction. This would be odd to write to the oldest

⁵⁶ Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81/1 (1962): 6.

congregation of Christ-followers which regularly sent teachers out to the other congregations.

This is a weak objection. All that Hebrews 2:3 indicates is that the recipients had not heard the message of salvation directly from Jesus. It implies nothing about whether they were converted in the first, second or third generation of the Christ-movement. Hebrews 2:3 would be an apt description of those who became part of the Jerusalem church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) or through the apostles' ministry in the Temple (Acts 2:47; 5:42-6:1), as well as anyone else who joined the movement through the preaching of those who knew Jesus. In one sense these would be "second-generation" Christ-followers, but they could also be part of the first chronological generation of the Christ-movement. If one thinks Paul could qualify as "one who heard" (which I doubt the author has in view), then Attridge is correct when he points out that "the first generation of Paul's Galatian, Thessalonian, or, for that matter, unknown Arabian (Gal 1:17) converts would fit the criterion enunciated here."⁵⁷

As for the author chiding the readers that they should already be teachers, this too is weak. It is generally agreed that Hebrews addresses a particular group within the "Christian" community at the location to which it was sent, not all Christ-followers to be found there. This is perhaps clearest when the author asks the audience to convey his greetings to "all your leaders and all the saints" (13:24). The recipients are here distinguished from the leaders of the community and other lay

⁵⁷ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 12 n. 100. Attridge contradicts this statement and cites the incorrect verse when he recently described Hebrews as coming from "the third generation of the Christian movement (2:2)." See Harold W. Attridge, "God in Hebrews," in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 197.

members. There is nothing about this that would preclude a group within the Jerusalem community. Even a group of people who had become Christ-followers early in the history of the Jerusalem church could have become stagnated in their spiritual growth and ceased developing their understanding of the "Christian" confession and its implications.

Generosity to the Saints

The recipients of Hebrews had demonstrated generosity to others and are encouraged to continue doing so (6:10; 13:2-3, 16). Ellingworth is more modest than most when he says that these passages stand "in tension with what we know from Paul's letters about the church in Jerusalem as being itself in need of financial help."⁵⁸ Similarly, Bruce says that when the writer refers to the recipients generosity to the saints (6:10) "we may reflect that throughout the apostolic age the Jerusalem church is more prominent as a recipients than as a giver of such ministry."⁵⁹ Drawing a stronger inference, Hagner is more representative when he claims that "the Jerusalem church was poverty-stricken and therefore hardly capable of the generosity for which the author compliments the readers."⁶⁰

The first difficulty with this objection is that it assumes Hebrews was written to the entire Jerusalem church rather than a segment of it. If it is possible that Hebrews addresses only one part of a larger community, then it is also possible that the recipients had more financial means than the community at large. That this is the case is implied when the author indicates that recipients continue to minister to the saints (6:10), encourages them to continue sharing their possessions (13:16) and

⁵⁸ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 29.

⁵⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 11.

⁶⁰ Hagner, *Hebrews*, 6.

exhorts them to show hospitality to strangers (13:2-3). These statements presuppose that the addressees had means to share and homes suitable for showing hospitality. This would not be true of *all* the members of any congregation of which we know and it is doubtful that there was a community of Christ-followers completely unknown to us that was comprised only of well-to-do members. Thus, as the objection is sometimes formulated it counts against Hebrews being sent anywhere! Ironically, some who raise this objection also highlight that Hebrews was written to a group with the larger "Christian" community in the place where they resided.⁶¹ Thus, rather than make broad generalizations about the poverty of the Jerusalem church, we must ask: Were there members of the Jerusalem church who were not among the poor requiring financial assistance? Were there any who could have expressed the generosity the author attributes to his readers? Both questions can be answered in the affirmative.

In Romans 15:26 Paul indicates that the churches in Macedonia and Achaia had contributed to his collection εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ. The genitive is clearly partitive and should be translated "for the poor *among* the saints who are in Jerusalem" (so NRSV, NAB, NIV, ESV, etc.). This implies that the poor who required financial assistance comprised only a part of the Jerusalem church. At the time of Paul's collection they may have comprised a large part of the church, but there remained some who were not so poor that they could not also render aid. This agrees with the portrait of the Jerusalem church in Acts wherein all but the most elite socio-economic classes are represented, including the wealthy and others who were well-to-do.

⁶¹ E.g., Hagner, *Hebrews*, 5; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 26-27.

Wealthy individuals were among Jesus' early followers.⁶² For example, several women were his benefactresses, including Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza (Luke 8:3). Some of these individuals were likely to have later been members of the Jerusalem church. Simon of Cyrene who was forced to carry Jesus' cross seems to have become an early member of the Jerusalem church and was the father of two apparent leaders of the movement, Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Mark's description of Simon "coming in from the country" may indicate that he owned a farm near the city. We know that the Jerusalem church included landowners like Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1) who were able sell property for what appears to have been significant sums of money. Barnabas' cousin Mark (cf. Col 4:10) appears to have come from a wealthy family; his mother owned at least one slave and a large house in which the early Jerusalem church met (Acts 12:12-17). One of the prophet-teachers in the Antioch church was Manaen, the foster-brother or boyhood companion (σύντροφος) of Herod Antipas (Acts 13:1). Fiensy is correct to suggest that he was probably a sometime resident of Jerusalem.⁶³ Lastly, the Cypriot Christ-follower Mnason had a house in or near Jerusalem that was large enough to host Paul and the representatives of the Diaspora churches who accompanied him to deliver assistance to the Judean churches (Acts 21:15-16). This last example is particularly significant since Mnason appears to have been well-to-do at the height of the Jerusalem church's poverty. He also appears to have been a generous individual. On both counts he is the kind of person that Hebrews

⁶² This paragraph draws freely but not exclusively from Fiensy, "Composition," 226-30.

⁶³ Fiensy, "Composition," 227.

addresses. There is no reason to doubt that there were others of similar socio-economic standing in the Jerusalem church to whom the epistle could have been sent.

Vos raises a related objection based on the fact that those to whom the readers ministered were called "saints" (6:10). Paul refers to the members of the Jerusalem church simply as "the saints" when he mentions the offering he collected to help the churches of Judea (Rom 15:25-26; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 9:1). "While 'saints' was of course a term applicable to all Christians," Vos writes, "still it was also a semi-technical term applied to the Christians at Jerusalem. They were the saints *par excellence*."⁶⁴ This is one of the chief reasons why he believes we cannot regard the original readers as Christ-followers in Jerusalem. It is not implausible that Hebrews uses the term in the same way as Paul, though this cannot be proven. But even if it could be, that would not count against a Jerusalem destination. For Vos has overlooked the fact that 6:10 indicates that the readers *continue* to minister to the saints. In addition, he has overlooked the request in 13:24, "greet all your leaders and all the saints." This implies that the recipients are located at the same general location as the saints to which the author refers. If "saints" is a semi-technical term for the poorer Christ-followers in Judea as Vos maintains, then that is where the epistle's recipients are located. The objection ends up being modest support for a Jerusalem destination. However, while Hebrews' employment of this term is consistent with this semi-technical usage, nothing demands that the term be taken this way; it remains possible that it is being used as a general term for Christ-followers.

⁶⁴ Vos, *Teaching*, 14.

Persecution

Hebrews addresses a community whose members had been persecuted in the early days of their participation in the Jesus-movement (10:32-34). The things suffered include being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, imprisonment and the plundering of property. The impression is given that the community had suffered because of its confession of Christ. If one dates Hebrews in the reign of Domitian, then this period of persecution probably occurred in the 50s or 60s. The main occasion of persecution known from this period is Nero's attack on the "Christians" in Rome. But as many point out, Hebrews does not seem to envision violence of that magnitude. If one dates Hebrews before 70, then this probably occurred in the late 30s or 40s. As we have seen already, some proponents of the Roman hypothesis try to link this period of persecution with the Claudian expulsion from Rome, though it is neither certain that the expulsion had anything to do with the Christ-movement nor that Christ-followers had been publicly exposed to reproach or imprisoned at that time.

We know that individual leaders of the Christ-movement like Paul and his co-workers experienced imprisonment on a number of occasions. There is also evidence that some "Christian" communities in the Diaspora endured persecution from their countrymen (e.g., 1 Thess 2:14; 1 Peter 4:16), but this does not appear to be state-sanctioned and is therefore unlikely to have included imprisonment. It is possible that Christ-followers outside Palestine were imprisoned by Roman officials at an early date, perhaps during the Neronian persecution, but there is no evidence for this until near the end of the first century (Rev 2:10).

The claim that Hebrews' description of the recipient's past suffering rules out a Jerusalem destination is based on the fact that the early church there produced martyrs—Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) and James the brother of John (Acts 12:1-2). This is supposed to be incompatible with Hebrews 10:32-34 since nothing is mentioned there of death. Furthermore, numerous scholars cite Hebrews 12:4 as being decisive: "in your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood." However, one should question whether 12:4 and 10:32-34 should be linked in this way. The phrase "struggle against sin" is parallel to the "sinners" of 12:3. This indicates two things. Most obviously, the author is saying that the recipients' current "struggle against sin" is analogous to the hostility Jesus endured from "sinners" (cf. Luke 24:7). Second, the parallelism suggests that the struggle in view is not primarily moral failure. Rather, like Jesus, the readers are involved in a struggle with "sinners." Elsewhere the same people may be in view when the author says that there will be a fury of fire that will consume the "adversaries" (10:27), an allusion to the cry in Isaiah 26:11 for Yahweh to defend his people and destroy his/their adversaries. In Hebrews 12:3-4 the author reminds his readers that Jesus also suffered adversity from "sinners."⁶⁵ They are reminded that in their adversity they are sharing in the reproach

⁶⁵ It is possible that the analogy is so close that the author sees the "sinners" who crucified Jesus, those who are causing the audience's difficulties and the "adversaries" of 10:27 as the same general group of people. In 10:26-31 the author reminds his readers that there is no further sacrifice for sin if they persist in sin but only the fearful judgement that awaits those who spurn the Son of God and outrage the Spirit of grace. A specific sin is in view, which the author earlier identified as falling away from the enlightenment they have known as part of the Christ-community (6:1-8) and which is here associated with the failure of some to meet together (10:25). Whereas in 10:26 the author says there is no sacrifice for sin left, in 6:6 he says that there can be no repentance for those who fall away because they are "crucifying again the Son of God and exposing him to public shame." Behind these parallels seems to be the idea that those who fall away from the community join those who crucified Jesus and can expect the judgement that will fall upon these adversaries of God. The choice confronting the readers is this: continue in your confession through this present time of trial and you will enjoy the benefits of Christ's sacrifice; fall away and you will join those who crucified Jesus and can anticipate the fearsome judgement being prepared for the enemies of God. This could be plausibly said to Christ-followers

that Christ himself bore (cf. 11:26; 13:12-13). Unlike Christ, though, they have not yet suffered to the point of shedding blood. Hebrews 12:4 is not, then, an absolute statement applicable to the entire history of the community entailing that not one member had ever died for their confession. Schenck is sympathetic to this reading when he considers the possibility that "the author has a specific 'struggle against sin' in mind, one that has newly cropped up in the community. If so, then the comment would only mean that the current crisis they face has not yet escalated to the point of martyrdom."⁶⁶ But even this should probably be qualified. In 13:7 the author exhorts his readers to remember their leaders who spoke the word of God to them and "consider the outcome of their way of life." Most scholars regard this as an alluding to the martyrdom of some of their recent leaders. If this is correct, then it contradicts the absolutist reading of 12:4. The two verses would not be contradictory since the author consistently distinguishes between those he addresses and the leaders of the community. What he says in 12:4 applies to his intended audience, the "laity" of one part of the community, not to the leadership.

Those who claim that 12:4 precludes a Jerusalem destination are wrong. So too are scholars like Kümmel who claim that 10:32-34 "does not coincide with what is known from Acts concerning the periods of suffering of the Christians in Jerusalem."⁶⁷ To the contrary, it coincides very well. We have evidence that Christ-

anywhere but it would be have special resonance for those who lived in Jerusalem since there falling away from the church would be tacit agreement and joining with the religious authorities that the Christ-movement considered responsible for Jesus' death. If this was the situation (as I believe it was), then the rational behind the impossibility of second repentance becomes clear. Those who fall away cannot repent again because they have deliberately joined with those who crucified Jesus and have rejected the atoning significance of his death. Once that has been knowingly forsaken, forgiveness could only be secured only by an additional sacrifice but it is impossible for Jesus to be crucified again.

⁶⁶ Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 91.

⁶⁷ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 399.

followers were persecuted for their confession in Palestine during the late 30s and early 40s.⁶⁸ We are specifically told that this included the imprisonment of regular members of the church: "Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). For no other location in the first three quarters of the first century do we have clear evidence that typical members of the Christ-movement were being imprisoned for their confession. At a slightly later period Herod Agrippa "laid hands to do harm to some who belonged to the church" (Acts 12:1). As a result James the brother of John is beheaded (12:2) and Peter arrested and placed in prison (12:3-4). These two apostles seem to have been singled out, but by referring to *τινα τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας* Luke suggests that a number of other members of the church had also been affected. What happened to James and Peter is mentioned but what happened to others is left summarized in the statement that Herod "laid hands to do harm." Apparently James' death and Peter's imprisonment were more extreme than what happened to others within the community. Of what might the less violent forms of attack consisted? Public reproach (flagellation? stocks?), various measures designed to cause tribulation and the confiscation of property are likely candidates. And that coincides perfectly with Hebrews 10:32-34.

The clues we have for the community's current persecution also fit comfortably with a Jerusalem destination. If 13:7 alludes to the death of recent leaders who spoke the word of God to the recipients, this could easily refer to the

⁶⁸ The churches in Judea may have also experienced a period of persecution during the eighth year of Claudius' reign in 48/49. Markus Bockmuehl has recently argued for this based on clues in 1 Thessalonians, Galatians and a very precise statement by the sixth-century writer Malalas of Antioch. See "1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and the Church in Jerusalem," *TynBul* 52/1 (2001): 1-31.

death of James and other leaders of the Jerusalem church in 62 C.E. when the High Priest Ananus usurped power after the death of Festus (A.J. 20.197-203). Ananus was not able to extend his attack on the Christ-movement to the general populace because some of the city's leading citizens protested to Agrippa asking him to order Ananus not to carry out further actions of this sort (20.201). Others went to report Ananus' action to Albinus, Festus' successor who was still making his way to Judea (20.202).⁶⁹ Albinus is reported to have written an angry letter to Ananus threatening punishment while Agrippa stripped him of the High Priesthood after only three months (20.203).

As a result of Ananus' actions the Jerusalem church would have been deprived of their core leadership. Newer, unproved leaders would have had to fill the void. It is precisely this kind of a leadership situation to which Hebrews points. An earlier generation of influential leaders seem to have been recently killed (13:7). Newer leaders have taken their place. The addressees are not giving the new leaders the same degree of obedience as they did the old leaders and seem to be making their job difficult. One reason the author of Hebrews wrote was to encourage them to obey the new leaders and not cause them so much difficulty (13:17). Since the death of their leaders the community has again begun to suffer hardship for their confession, but they have not yet suffered to the point of death. The author encourages them to persevere through their present difficulties (12:3-17), knowing that Jesus (12:3) and many of the saints of Israel's past (11:32-38) underwent similar

⁶⁹ Given that the Jerusalem church included people who were well-to-do, these leading citizens were almost certainly Christ-followers or at least included Christ-followers. After all, they had the most reason to complain about the murder of James and the other leaders of their community. The fact that Josephus does not distinguish Christ-followers in any way indicates that he did not see them as anything but Jews. If Hebrews was written to Jerusalem, then some of the recipients of the letter are likely to have been among those who protested.

trials. We might expect just this sort of experience for the Jerusalem church at almost any point between the death of James in 62 C.E. up through the beginning of Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem in the summer of 68, and perhaps even until Titus renewed the siege in the spring of 70 C.E.. Rather than proof that the epistle was not written to Jerusalem, Hebrews' description of the community's past persecution favors the hypothesis.

Worship of Jerusalem Christians

Raymond Brown raises a further objection to the Jerusalem hypothesis because it is tied to "the assumption that the addressees were Jewish Christians who were constantly tempted to return to their ancestral religion by the attraction of the Temple liturgy and sacrifices which they could see continuing in Jerusalem." He then observes that Christ-followers in Jerusalem continued to worship in the Temple as faithful Jews up until the last glimpse that we get of them in Acts 21:23-24, 26. The persuasive thrust of Hebrews would not fit with this. If Hebrews was written to Christ-followers in Jerusalem who continued to worship in the Temple, he asks, "why would they need a directive not to return to what they had given up?" If Hebrews was written after 70, "how could Christians return to a sacrificial cult that no longer functioned?"⁷⁰

Few who have advocated a Jerusalem destination have missed the fact that Acts portrays the church there worshipping in the Temple. Brown's objection is thus partially based on a straw-man. But his objection does inadvertently highlight one of the major weaknesses of the traditional Jerusalem hypothesis: it is framed in a post-

⁷⁰ Brown, *Introduction*, 698.

parting of the ways way. As usually articulated, the classic Jerusalem hypothesis explains the worship of Christians in the Temple either as a compromise on the part of conservative (or even "legalistic") members of the Jerusalem church or as a temporary allowance during a period of transition. In either scenario the author is understood to be chastising his readers for continued participation in the Temple cult as if Christ-followers should already see tension between their confession and traditional cultic worship. This is in turn based on the assumption that the author and other early Christ-followers would have soon recognized that in confessing Christ they had joined a different religion than the cultic religion of Israel. The recipients are thus being reprimanded for not seeing this too.

All of these assumptions are thoroughly anachronistic and can be set aside. Nothing in Hebrews presupposes that its recipients had ceased to participate in the Temple cultus. Nothing in Hebrews argues against a "return" to traditional Jewish worship. Nothing in Hebrews suggests that continued participation up to the current crisis was inappropriate. Rather, the argument of Hebrews is that the High Priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus render the levitical cultus obsolete because it has now reached its foreordained *telos*. For this reason the cult is soon to disappear (8:13; cf. 10:9). The persuasive thrust of Hebrews reads like an argument designed to convince readers that it is okay for them to leave the levitical cult behind, not chastisement for participating in it nor an attempt to persuade them not to return to it. Stated differently, the argument of Hebrews can be understood as an attempt to provide Jews who confess Christ with a biblically grounded rationale for leaving the levitical cultus and Temple behind. Read in this way, Hebrews presupposes continued participation and is addressed to people who are being forced to choose

between their confession of Christ and their adherence to the injunctions of the Law. The greater epistemic certainty of the latter is what causes the former to be called into question. If there is a plausible occasion when Christ-followers in Jerusalem could have been faced with such a dilemma, then nothing about the thrust of Hebrews' argument is in tension with what is known about the worship of the Jerusalem church.

Returning to Judaism

Childs mentions Moule's view that Hebrews makes good sense if it was written when Jewish nationalism ran high after the outbreak of the Jewish war. According to Childs, the one thing that most undermines the cogency of this theory is that "the basic polarity within the letter is not set in terms of an opposition between Christianity and Judaism."⁷¹ Childs and others who make this point are correct to note that Hebrews does not contrast Christianity and Judaism but mistaken in thinking that he could have. As argued in a previous chapter, these mutually exclusive categories are anachronistic for the first century. The author and recipients were Christ-following Jews, not Christians. The absence of a contrast or opposition between Judaism and Christianity is precisely what we should expect in a Second Temple Jewish document like Hebrews, *especially* if it was written to a Palestinian congregation. This poses no difficulty for the Jerusalem hypothesis.

Tabernacle Rather than Temple, Disinterest in Contemporary Realities

The argument of Hebrews is crafted around the tabernacle and not explicitly around the Temple. Some scholars believe this implies that the author is not

⁷¹ Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (London: SCM, 1984), 408.

concerned with contemporary realities. For example, Moffat states that there "is not a syllable in the writing which suggests that either the author or his readers had any connexion with or interest in the contemporary temple and ritual of Judaism; their existence mattered as little to his idealist method of argument as their abolition."⁷²

This alleged disinterest is claimed to be problematic for a Jerusalem destination.

Craig Koester states the objection in his recent commentary by observing: "The entire discussion of Levitical institutions is done with reference to the ancient Tabernacle; *no reference is made to the Jerusalem Temple.*"⁷³ Koester offers no reason for why this is supposed to be problematic for locating the readers in Jerusalem. Apparently he believes it is obvious.⁷⁴ It is not.

This objection is odd in light of the clear continuity that existed between the tabernacle and Temple. Marie Isaacs is correct when she observes that the plan of the tabernacle and its cultic rituals were replicated in the Jerusalem Temple and therefore "it may be safely assumed that what he says about the one includes the other, even though the Temple is not overtly discussed."⁷⁵ It is also an odd objection given the fact that the Mosaic legislation of the cultus is formulated entirely in terms of the tabernacle. The author of Hebrews desires to show that the prescriptions in the Law are now fulfilled in Christ and superseded by his priesthood and sacrifice. Necessarily he must formulate his biblical argument in terms of the tabernacle. It

⁷² James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), xxii.

⁷³ Koester, *Hebrews*, 49. Emphasis original.

⁷⁴ Elsewhere Koester has written a detailed study of the tabernacle in Hebrews but does not identify the supposed problem there either. See Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* (CBQMS 22; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1989), 152-83.

⁷⁵ Marie E. Isaacs, "Hebrews," in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (ed. John Barclay and John Sweet; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 148.

does not follow that the author has no concern about the living incarnation of this legislation in the Jerusalem Temple. To the contrary, he does. The theological argument is designed to show readers that the cult's operation has been rendered obsolete and can now be left behind. The eternal and unshakeable reality has been revealed; that which is temporary and shakable will soon be done away with. The tabernacle was a mobile, transitory structure. This image happens to be appropriate for the author's argument that the institutions of the old covenant are transitory — they began that way. Part of the strategy by which he attempts to convince his readers of this is to draw a contrast between the heavenly reality and the earthly type. This too necessitates that he speak of the tabernacle rather than the Temple.

The Old Testament explicitly states that the tabernacle was built according to a pattern (τύπος) shown to Moses on the mountain (Exod 25:9, 40), something the author brings to his readers' remembrance (Heb 8:5). As with other Second Temple writers, the author infers from this the existence of a heavenly archetype of which the earthly tabernacle/Temple is a shadow or copy.⁷⁶ It is important to his rhetorical strategy to use this to prove that Jesus' sacrifice is more effective than the levitical sacrifices. To do this he observes that the levitical sacrifices are offered in a sanctuary that is merely a copy of the true heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus' blood was offered (8:2, 5). The implication is that the levitical sacrifices were themselves less effective proleptic shadows of Jesus' sacrifice (cf. 9:11-14). Because Jesus' sacrifice was offered in the true tabernacle it alone can clean the conscience in addition to the

⁷⁶ The Chronicler indicates that the plan of the Temple may have been drawn up on the basis of divine revelation (1 Chron 28:19), but he does not say that David was *shown* anything upon which the Temple's plan was based. Ezekiel 43:10-12 also mentions a plan for the eschatological Temple that may have been revealed to the prophet but the text does not indicate that Ezekiel was shown a heavenly archetype upon which the plan was based.

body (cf. 9:9-10). Thus, once Jesus' sacrifice has been made in the true tabernacle the levitical sacrifices and the earthly tabernacle in which they are offered have fulfilled their function. The new covenant of Jesus' priesthood and sacrifice renders the old covenant of levitical priesthood and sacrifice obsolete "and what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear" (8:13). The contemporary cultus *is* in view. Thus Koester is inadvertently correct when he paraphrases the meaning of this last verse as: "The old order still exists, but its end is imminent."⁷⁷

The contrast between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries is found in other Second Temple texts.⁷⁸ Significantly, the terminology of the tabernacle remains prominent. For example, speaking of the tabernacle in contrast to the heavenly sanctuary 2 *Baruch* indicates that the Temple was not the real sanctuary; the real sanctuary is the heavenly tabernacle shown to Moses (4:3-6). It also refers to the vessels of the Temple as "the holy vessels of the tabernacle" (6:8). In Wisdom 9:8 Solomon is portrayed as recounting God's command for him to build a temple (ναός) and an altar "in the city of your dwelling" (ἐν πόλει κατασκηνώσεως σου). Drawing from Exodus, the temple is described as "a copy of the holy tabernacle which has been prepared from the beginning" (μίμημα σκηνῆς ἁγίας, ἣν προητοίμασας ἀπ' ἀρχῆς). In Revelation the heavenly temple (ναός) is mentioned several times, but in 15:5 it is identified specifically as the heavenly "tabernacle of witness" (cf. 13:5; 21:3). Furthermore, those brought out of the great tribulation will

⁷⁷ Koester, *Hebrews*, 388. Koester believes that any date between 60 and 90 is possible and that interpretation cannot assume or preclude the existence of the Temple (*Hebrews*, 54). Fair enough. But it is not clear why Koester does not allow his interpretation of 8:13 to lead him to embrace an early date. If 8:13 is not a clear indication that the cultus is in operation, then one must ask what it could possibly mean to say that "the old order still exists, but its end is imminent" in a post-70 context. What aspect of the old order of priesthood and sacrifice still existed after 70?

⁷⁸ Because the author of Hebrews appears not to have utilized Hebrew texts, what follows will quote Greek translations of Old Testament and Apocryphal texts and follow the versification of the LXX.

serve God in his temple and he will "tabernacle near them" (σκηνώσει ἐπ' αὐτούς) (7:15; cf. Psalm 60:5). The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice similarly mention a heavenly tabernacle when referring to the macrocosmic sanctuary (4Q403 1 ii 10; 4Q405 20 ii-21-22:7). The writers of these texts undoubtedly believed in the real existence of a heavenly sanctuary and had no difficulty describing it as either a tabernacle or temple.

As the noun for *dwelling* in Wisdom 9:8 indicates, in an important sense the Temple is the tabernacle because it is the place where God *dwells* with his people. This idea is already current in Psalm 77:60 where the abandoned tabernacle in Shiloh is described as "his tent (σκήνωμα αὐτοῦ) where he dwelt among men (οὗ κατεσκήνωσεν ἐν ἀνθρώποις)."⁷⁹ This same language is picked up in John 1:14 where the Word is said to have "tabernacled among us" (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). The subsequent narrative confirms that this is intended to be Temple language when it describes controversy regarding Jesus' words regarding the destruction of the Temple and his death (2:19-21). Because the Temple and the tabernacle are functionally equivalent, Sirach 24:7-17 can portray Wisdom as finding her dwelling place in Jerusalem, specifically in the "holy tent" on Mount Zion. Through the fiction of the exilic setting of Tobit's prayer, in Tobit the writer exhorts readers to display the kind of piety that will ensure the Temple's safety. He encourages them to acknowledge the Lord "so that his tabernacle (ἡ σκηνή) may be rebuilt in you in joy" (13:11). It is unlikely that this represents an anti-Temple sentiment; the author does

⁷⁹ This and other passages cited below use the term σκήνωμα rather than σκηνή. In some passages σκήνωμα is best translated as *dwelling* and in others it is synonymous with σκηνή. It is not always clear whether passages employing σκήνωμα refer to the tabernacle or more loosely to the Temple as God's dwelling. The terms are frequently interchangeable. This is most vividly seen in 1 Kings 2:28-29 where τὸ σκήνωμα τοῦ κυρίου and τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ κυρίου are parallel synonyms and in 1 Kings 8:4 where τὸ σκήνωμα τοῦ μαρτυρίου occurs twice as the equivalent of the Pentateuch's ἡ σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου.

not want the tabernacle rebuilt instead of the Temple. Rather, the tabernacle is equivalent to the Temple.

The passages that have been cited in this section suggest that the terminology of the tabernacle could be readily employed when referring to either the Jerusalem or heavenly Temple. This is confirmed by several other texts. In Lamentations 2:6-7 "his [the Lord's] tabernacle" (τὸ σκηνώμα αὐτοῦ), the "house of the Lord" (οἶκος κυρίου) and "his sanctuary" (ἁγίασμα αὐτοῦ) are found together as synonyms. Similarly, in Judith "the sanctuary" (τὰ ἁγία), "tabernacle" (τὸ σκηνώμα) and "sacred house" (οἴκου ἡγιασμένου) are equivalent terms that refer to the Jerusalem Temple (9:8, 13; cf. 5:17-19; 8:24). 2 Chronicles mentions the tabernacle prior to the construction of the Temple (cf. 1:5, 13). Long after the narrative of the Temple's dedication Hezekiah gives a speech reprimanding the nation for allowing the Temple to become derelict. He accuses their predecessors of turning their faces "away from the tabernacle of the Lord" (ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς κυρίου) (29:6) which is parallel to the "house of the Lord" (29:5) and clearly refers to the Temple. Several psalms traditionally attributed to David mention the tabernacle (14:1; 25:8; 26:5-6; 60:5; 42:3). If one rejects the ascriptions of Davidic authorship, then they provide instances where *tabernacle* is a straightforward reference to the Jerusalem Temple. But even if Davidic authorship were granted, the fact would remain that when they were used liturgically in the Second Temple period they would have been understood with the Temple in view. Several psalms not ascribed to David may also mention the tabernacle when the Temple is in view: 45:5; 73:7 (referring to the destruction of the Temple); 83:2; 131:5 (cf. Acts 7:44, 46).

The Damascus Document (CD 7.15) describes the separation of Israel from Judah and Israel's exile and removal from the Temple because of idolatry. But rather than use the common term for the sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) normally employed to refer to the Temple it refers instead to the Lord's "tent" (אֹהֶל). This is the common word used in the Old Testament when the tabernacle is referred to as the tent of meeting. In this passage reference to the tabernacle is reference to the Temple. In his study of the tabernacle Koester notes this passage and some of those cited above.⁸⁰ However, he fails to appreciate the significance they have for the interpretation of Hebrews and how they render unviable his objection against a Jerusalem destination based on Hebrews' use of tabernacle language. The tabernacle and Temple were functional equivalents. The terminology of the tabernacle could be employed when the Temple was in view.⁸¹ If this is so, then Hebrews' terminology cannot be problematic for locating the recipients in Jerusalem.

At one point Koester says that a major problem confronting views like Kosmala's and Yadin's is that none of the published Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the Israelite tabernacle or tent of meeting. In light of the passages that have been cited in this section, it is difficult to really see this as a major problem for either a Palestinian destination generally or the proposals of Kosmala and Yadin. Nonetheless, since Koester made this point the full Scrolls corpus has been published. It turns out that

⁸⁰ Koester, *Dwelling of God*, 13-18; 23-75.

⁸¹ In this regard it should also be remembered that the instructions for the construction and furnishing of the Temple in the Temple Scroll are derived almost entirely from the prescriptions for the building of the tabernacle in Exodus, not from the biblical descriptions of the Temples of Solomon and Ezekiel. See Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Furnishings of the Temple According to the *Temple Scroll*," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress* (ed. Julio Trebolle Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner; 2 vols.; STDJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 2.621-34.

the tabernacle is mentioned, and in a way that is extremely significant for the interpretation of Hebrews.

One of the major controversies between Second Temple groups concerned the preparation of the ashes of the red heifer required for the removal of corpse impurity.⁸² Corpse impurity was considered the most serious form of impurity one could contract (even more so for priests).⁸³ If the ashes of the red heifer were not properly prepared, then some people would not consider them effective to remove the impurity and all the sacrifices of the Temple would be considered defiled. This made the issue one of great practical concern to the worshipper who had concerns about whether the ashes were being properly prepared. As might be expected, there are Qumran texts that address the issues of this controversy. One of these, 4QTohorot B^a (4Q276), describes the procedures that should be followed by the priest performing the ceremony in which the red heifer is slaughtered and burned. One thing he is supposed to do is carry the heifer's blood in a clay pot and "sprinkle from its blood with [his] finger seven [times to]ward the t[e]nt of meeting" (frag. 1 4-5).⁸⁴ Here the tent of meeting is mentioned, not the Temple, but the text is not indifferent to contemporary realities. To the contrary, the text was composed precisely because its author *was* concerned with what was going on in the Temple of his day. When the text refers to the tent of meeting it has a contemporary referent in view, the sanctuary

⁸² See Joseph M. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic-Sadducean Controversies about Purity and the Qumran Texts," *JJS* 31 (1980): 157-61.

⁸³ See E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE—CE* (London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 71-72; idem, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 34, 184-92, 263-66.

⁸⁴ This is the translation given by J.M. Baumgarten in *DJD XXXV* as reprinted in Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, eds., *Texts Concerned with Religious Law* (DSSR 1; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 339. Others believe that the "seven [times]" does not refer to the sprinkling of blood but to another action taking place at the entrance of the "tent of meeting" that was mentioned in the lacuna. Neither interpretation affects the point made here.

of the Temple. Why then does the writer employ the terminology of the tabernacle in reference to the Temple? The reason is that he is addressing legal issues and it is proper to employ the legal terminology found in the Pentateuch. This holds true even when contemporary realities are different than those described in the Pentateuch, such as the existence of the Temple instead of the tabernacle. Even at a later date one can find occasional instances of this in the Mishnah. For example, in comparing the tabernacle at Shiloh and the Jerusalem Temple it is said that the most holy things could be consumed "only within the curtains" (*m. Meg.* 1:11). The legal rule applies to both institutions but is formulated exclusively in terms of the tabernacle's curtains. When applied to the Temple the referent is actually to its enclosing walls which, as far as legal matters are concerned, are equivalent. But the most important example of the Pentateuch's tabernacle terminology being applied to the Temple is found in a second Qumran text that mentions the tabernacle.

4QMMT is concerned with halakhic regulations pertaining to Jerusalem, the Temple and the cultus. The relevant rules governing these institutions in the Law are all formulated in terms of the wilderness camp and the tabernacle. This raises a hermeneutical issue: should these laws be applied in a one-to-one manner, or do disparities between biblical descriptions and contemporary realities give some leniency in applying these laws? For example, should everything the Law says about the tabernacle be applied to the Temple, or might the application of some of these laws need to be adjusted to accommodate differences between the tabernacle and Temple? The author(s) of MMT address this hermeneutical issue and state their position: "and we are of the opinion that the sanctuary is the 'tent of meeting'" (B 29)

([משכן אוהל מועד הוא]).⁸⁵ The point MMT here makes is that as far as legal rulings are concerned, the Temple and the tabernacle are equivalent.

Anything said about the tabernacle applies to the Temple. Marie Isaacs is therefore correct when she says that "in the first century, what was said of the wilderness tabernacle would have been thought to refer as well to the temple in Jerusalem."⁸⁶

A different version of the objection addressed here claims that Hebrews cannot have been written to Jerusalem because it does not reflect contemporary practices but instead derives all of its information from the Pentateuch. This is not true. In an important but too often neglected article William Horbury has shown that Hebrews' discussion of priesthood is not wholly detached from historical realities.⁸⁷ While the author does not engage in some of the debates of the Second Temple period he does share some of the disputed views that are not found in the Old Testament. For example, he believes that the tithe belongs to the priest with no mention of any of it going to the Levites (7:5).⁸⁸ Similarly, he associates the ashes of the red heifer and the Day of Atonement with reference to purification (9:13), something that is found in other early Jewish texts.⁸⁹ These two features suggest that the author was indeed aware of contemporary issues. Horbury also notes that

⁸⁵ This is a quotation from the reconstructed text by Qimron and Strugnell. I have been unable to find anyone who disputes the reconstruction at this point. On the peculiarity of the syntax and meaning of the combination *חשב ש*, see Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4, V Miqsat ma'ase ha-torah* (DJD X; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 99 (sec. 3.5.4.3).

⁸⁶ Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews & James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 14; cf. Isaacs, "Hebrews," 148.

⁸⁷ William Horbury, "The Aaronic Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JSNT* 19 (1983): 43-71.

⁸⁸ The Temple Scroll often presents positions that conflict with the practices of the day. One of these is that it restores the tithe to the Levites (60.6-9). The scroll grants Levites parity with the priests in other respects as well. See further Jacob Milgrom, "The Qumran Cult: Its Exegetical Methods," in *Temple Scroll Studies* (ed. George J. Brooke; JSPSup 7; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 176-77.

⁸⁹ In addition to the later Rabbinic texts cited by Horbury ("Aaronic Priesthood," 51-53) see 1QS 3.3-5; 5Q13 4.2-3. 4Q512 29-30 associates purification with the holocaust offering, likewise not one of the purification offerings in the Old Testament.

Josephus' treatment of Numbers 18:21 once follows scripture to the letter while twice it is adapted to the practice that he knew as a priest. This is clear precedent establishing "that a Jewish writer could expound the Septuagint without any allusion to contemporary Jewish usage which he undoubtedly knew."⁹⁰ Thus, while allusions to contemporary practices in Hebrews are minimal (though there may be more than Horbury observes), that does not preclude the possibility that the author was personally acquainted with the Temple cultus but had reasons for explicating his argument entirely in terms of the normative scriptural prescriptions.

Finally, we must question whether this objection is even plausible. Does it really make sense to say that a Jew (whether a Christ-follower or not) in the Second Temple period could write extensively about the tabernacle in response to a contemporary situation among his audience but not have the Temple in view? I do not believe it is. The Temple was simply too central to Jewish identity and to the conceptual world that governed Jewish (including Christian) thought for one to be indifferent to it.⁹¹ The only plausible explanation for the absence of explicit reference to the Temple is that the author deliberately avoided mentioning it. Steve Motyer has recently taken this position as well. Motyer suggests that the author is addressing a "ticklish nexus of issues" and therefore as part of his rhetorical strategy he "avoids deliberate reference to the Temple and proceeds cautiously and slowly, basing his argument solidly on Scripture, and allowing the implications to appear gradual and unobtrusively, but yet clearly." Why? Because "a full-frontal assault on Temple and

⁹⁰ Horbury, "Aaronic Priesthood," 52.

⁹¹ See Francis Schmidt, *How The Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

cult would be wholly counter-productive."⁹² This is a far more reasonable explanation for the absence of direct reference to the Temple than the author's supposed indifference to it.

If the readers were located in Jerusalem then one can all the more understand why the author would employ a strategy of deliberately not mentioning the Temple even though he has it in view. After all, central to the charges brought against Jesus was the claim that he wanted to destroy the Temple (Mark 14:58; Matt 26:61). Mark and Matthew present this as a simple false accusation but John's gospel acknowledges that Jesus had made an enigmatic statement about the Temple that was readily interpreted in this way (John 2:19; cf. Matt 12:6). Luke says that a similar charge was brought against Stephen (Acts 6:13-14). Moreover, when Paul visited the Temple people who had apparently had contact with his message in Asia see him there. They spread the rumor that Paul has defiled the Temple by bringing a Gentile into the court of the Israelites. The rumor's plausibility rests on the fact that Paul has a reputation, deserved or not, for teaching everywhere "against the people, the Law and this place" (Acts 21:28; cf. 21:20-1). However one evaluates the historicity of the individual passages, it should be clear that non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem viewed Christ-followers with grave suspicion in matters related to the Temple. Anyone writing to Christ-followers in Jerusalem arguing for the positions Hebrews takes would have to be most careful. Almost anything he explicitly said about the Temple would be prone to misinterpretation by non-Christian Jews if they happened to hear it.

⁹² Steve Motyer, "The Temple in Hebrews: Is It There?" in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 180.

The fact that Hebrews formulates its discussion almost entirely in terms of the tabernacle does not imply that the argument is so "bookish" that it is indifferent to contemporary realities. Neither does it pose any difficulty for locating the original recipients in Jerusalem.

Timothy

Hebrews 13:23 conveys the news that Timothy has been released, presumably from imprisonment (we know nothing about this incident). If Timothy arrives in time he will be with the author when he next visits his readers. This is thought to be a difficulty for locating the readers in Jerusalem because it is presumed that Christ-followers there would not have known Timothy. This is not a safe assumption to make in light of how widely leaders within the Christ-movement traveled as missionaries and teachers and the Jerusalem church's role as the mother-church of the movement. For these two reasons alone one can easily imagine that Timothy would have been in Jerusalem at some point, even if there were no specific evidence for this. But as things are, Acts gives us good reason to believe that Timothy accompanied Paul to Jerusalem on two different occasions.

In Acts 18:5 Silas and Timothy arrive in Corinth from Macedonia to rejoin Paul. When Paul leaves Corinth for Syria he is accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila as far as Ephesus (18:18-19). From Ephesus he sets sail and lands in Caesarea from which "he went up [to Jerusalem] and greeted the church" before returning to Antioch (18:22).⁹³ Nothing is mentioned about Silas and Timothy departing from Paul after they join him in Corinth. Even though they are not named in the latter part

⁹³ The Greek text does not specify Jerusalem but it is implied. Against the suggestion that Paul did not fulfill his objective and only visited a congregation in Caesarea, see F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 356-57.

of the journey, it seems that they had joined Paul in Corinth in order to accompany him on this journey. It should also be recalled that Silas, Timothy's evangelization partner, had been a leader in the Jerusalem church and had spent time in Antioch (Acts 15:22, 33). He would have had good reason to accompany Paul on this journey and it would be natural for Timothy to continue traveling with Paul and Silas.

It is all but certain that Timothy accompanied Paul in the delivery of the offering for the poor in Judea. The last time Timothy is mentioned in the narrative of Acts he is with Paul as he prepares to set off for Jerusalem (20:4). With them are a number of individuals who we can infer were the representatives of the churches that contributed to the offering. The subsequent narrative does not identify them as the representatives, nor does it explicitly say they accompanied Paul in his subsequent journey. However, the narrative seems to subsume them into the "we" after they, Paul, Luke and perhaps others met up again in Troas (20:5-6). The unspecified "we" is again with Paul when he arrives in Jerusalem (21:15). We can infer that Acts 20:4 is a list of the representatives because they are identified by a variety of toponyms, suggesting that they had come from the churches in those regions, and because Trophimus is one of them. Trophimus the Ephesian was spotted in Jerusalem with Paul and Paul was subsequently accused of bringing him into the Temple (Acts 21:29). It is safe to presume that not only Trophimus, but the rest of those named in 20:4, including Timothy, also made the journey all the way to Jerusalem. Thus, there is reason to believe that Timothy would have been known to the Jerusalem church.

Was Timothy also known to the Christ-movement in Rome? Probably. In the least he knew some of the people Paul mentions in Romans 16. Moreover, the fact that he is imprisoned may suggest that he was himself in Rome when the author

wrote since that was the central destination for Imperial prisoners. If so, this is further evidence that the author neither addressed the Roman congregation nor was with them when he wrote. He was elsewhere in Italy, perhaps Puteoli (Acts 28:13).⁹⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the objections commonly cited against locating the recipients of Hebrews in Jerusalem. As with the arguments examined in the last chapter, each proves to be weak. Rather than being problematic, when properly assessed the evidence cited in a few of these objections lends a measure of support to the Jerusalem hypothesis. This and the last chapter have demonstrated that there are no good reasons for believing that Hebrews was written to Rome and no good reasons to discount the possibility that it was written to Jerusalem. Until the nineteenth century the tradition was almost unanimous in affirming that Hebrews was in fact written to Jerusalem. This position was endorsed by the most eminent Hebrews scholars of the nineteenth century despite its status as a traditional view. Given the failure of the Roman hypothesis and the fact that no other candidates readily commend themselves, it is worth reinvestigating the possibility that this view is correct after all.

The subsequent chapters will argue that the tradition and former consensus were basically correct: Hebrews is an epistle that was written to a group within the Jerusalem church. Older formulations of this view were beset by the same anachronistic assumptions that bedevil the Roman hypothesis and other alternatives. Here we will put forward a new take on this old view that deliberately reads

⁹⁴ I owe this suggestion to Philip F. Esler.

Hebrews as a document of Second Temple Judaism. The arguments that will be offered will be comprised of a mix of new exegetical insight and new external evidence. Rather than attempt to offer all the arguments that could be cited in favor of the hypothesis, or even all of the stronger arguments, we will focus on one particular line of argumentation centered upon certain statements in Hebrews 11-13.

Chapter Six

Epistles, Sermons, Exhortation and Prophecy

Few scholars today would disagree with Erich Grässer's contention that the key to understanding the literary character of Hebrews is to understand that it is an early Christian sermon.¹ The issue of Hebrews' genre is important because it impinges on how we understand the nature of the document and even how we refer to it. Unfortunately, once again the consensus of Hebrews scholarship is demonstrably mistaken. Hebrews is not a sermon, it is an epistle. Failure to acknowledge this has contributed to Hebrews' continuing status as the riddle of the New Testament. This chapter will briefly reevaluate the primary evidence that supposedly points to Hebrews' homiletic character. This reevaluation will uncover new insight into how the author viewed the function of his epistle that will bear upon the reconstruction of the situation it addresses.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Hebrews 13:22 has proven to be the decisive verse in determining the genre of the document. Here the author is thought to refer to his composition as a "word of exhortation," a phrase that is allegedly a fixed expression for a sermon. Below it will be shown that it is not. But there is another statement in the verse that should weigh

¹ Erich Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963," *TRu* 30 (1964): 160; repr. in idem, *Aufbruch und Verheißung: Gesammelte Aufsätze Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 65; ed. Martin Evang and Otto Merk; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 23.

heavily in our assessment of Hebrews' genre. In the very same sentence the author gives explicit indication that he thought he was writing an epistle: "for I have written (ἐπέστειλα) to you briefly" (13:22). Stirewalt observes that the verb ἐπιστέλλω was originally used with the meaning "give an oral order" and acquired the meaning "write a letter," retaining both meanings in subsequent usage. After the term's semantic range broadened to encompass all types of letters "something of the idea of injunction which may be modified into request, exhortation, admonition, or instruction, continues to adhere to the term."² Hebrews exemplifies each of these features.

While the absence of an epistolary opening is unusual, this does not disqualify Hebrews from being an epistle. Several specialists on ancient epistolography continue to accept it as an epistle without any indication that this is problematic.³ As a general rule it is sometimes said that the opening is the only feature required for an epistle. Nonetheless, Stirewalt, who has made this statement, acknowledges that there are exceptions to the rule. In his analysis of the letter-essay he includes several examples that lack the heading "because they have the other epistolary characteristics."⁴ Hebrews 13 contains several features common to early Christian epistles.⁵ Beginning with the closing formula, these include a request for

² M. Luther Stirewalt, Jr., *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography* (SBLRBS 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 85.

³ E.g. William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 68 (though cf. p. 19); Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 96-97 and John L. White, "New Testament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography," *ANRW* II.25.2, 1752-54. White entertains but does not fully endorse the idea that the epistolary form of Hebrews may be a pretense; he does not deny that Hebrews displays clear epistolary features.

⁴ Martin Luther Stirewalt, "The Form and Function of the Greek Letter-Essay," in *The Romans Debate* (rev. ed.; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 162.

⁵ Compare what follows with the elements found in the structure of the typical Pauline letter. These are helpfully summarized in David E. Aune, "Letters, literary genre of," in Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary*

prayer (13:18), a form of the peace wish (13:20-21) and secondary greetings (13:24).

The chapter also mentions the epistolary topoi of letter writing (13:22), travel plans (13:23), reunion with the addressees (13:23) and a concluding paraenesis (13:22).

Twice the author begins sentences with παρακάτω. Bjerkelund has argued that this is a fixed epistolary formula in both private and official letters.⁶

The epistolary features of ch. 13 are more than sufficient to classify Hebrews as an epistle. Many writers acknowledge the more obvious of these features but consider the chapter a secondary addition which the author has appended to a sermon. However, contrary to what is frequently claimed, the epistolary features of Hebrews are not limited to the last chapter. Hebrews 6:9-12 is a textbook example of the expression of confidence which John White has shown to be commonly found as a formal element in the body of a letter.⁷ The author directly addresses the recipients as "brothers" (Heb 3:1, 12: 10:19), a feature common in the Pauline letters that conveys affection in a manner analogous to the expressions of affection found in private epistles. In one of these verses (3:12) the author warns the recipients to "take care," a formula found in numerous papyri by which an author tries to compel the addressee to attend to a request.⁸ "Know" and "I want you to know" are common epistolary

of *New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 268-72. Of course, we should not expect Hebrews to correspond to the Pauline letters in every respect. There is nonetheless sufficient overlap to establish that Hebrews should be classified alongside them as an epistle.

⁶ Carl J. Bjerkelund, *Parakalô: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967), 34-111. Regrettably Bjerkelund uncritically accepts the claim that Hebrews is a sermon and dismisses these examples because they occur in an "epistolary addition" to the work (p. 31, 32). Subsequent chapters will demonstrate that ch. 13 is an integral part of the entire work and not some kind of epistolary postscript that was added to an otherwise complete work.

⁷ See the examples in John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 205-206; idem, "NT Epistolary Literature," 1737.

⁸ For references see White, "NT Epistolary Literature," 1717.

disclosure formulae whereby an author announces information.⁹ The author of Hebrews employs a variant of this formula when he says "for you know..." to inform (again!) his readers of the consequences of not attending to his exhortations (12:17). Similarly, the author reminds the recipients of events in their past (10:32-34) and uses this as the basis for telling them not to throw away their confidence (10:35). In 10:25 the author gently indicates that some in the community are remiss in their duty to meet together as a congregation. This is similar to the kinds of practical issues addressed by Paul (e.g., 1 Cor 5:1-6:11; Phil 4:2-3) which Aune classifies under the epistolary topos of domestic events.¹⁰

The only difficulty that can be cited against classifying Hebrews as an epistle is the lack of epistolary opening. Stirewalt observes that "the letter-essay usually begins with the letter-heading, though it is too often omitted in collecting and editing to be expected as a regular feature."¹¹ It is possible that this accounts for the absence of an opening in Hebrews. Similarly, Richard Bauckham suggests the opening may have been thought inapplicable when the letter was copied for a wider readership. He also suggests that it could have been left to the messenger who delivered the letter to supply the information normally supplied in an epistolary opening.¹² This too is a plausible suggestion. However we explain the lack of epistolary prescript the fact remains that Hebrews displays several other epistolary features and was considered an epistle by the author himself. Barring overwhelming evidence for another

⁹ White, "NT Epistolary Literature," 1736, 1738.

¹⁰ Aune, "Letters," 271.

¹¹ Martin Luther Stirewalt, "The Form and Function of the Greek Letter-Essay," in *The Romans Debate* (rev. ed.; ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 162.

¹² Richard Bauckham, "Pseudo-Apostolic Letters," *JBL* 107/3 (1988): 474.

classification, this should suffice to establish that Hebrews is an epistle. Those who advocate the idea that Hebrews is a sermon believe they have such evidence.

Hebrews as a Sermon: Summary of the Argument

The chief argument for classifying Hebrews as a sermon is based on a verbal parallel between Hebrews 13:22 and Acts 13:15.¹³ In Acts 13 Paul and his companions arrive in Psidian Antioch and attend synagogue on the Sabbath. After the reading from the Law and Prophets the synagogue officials send them a message saying: "Brothers, if among you there is any word of exhortation (λόγος παρακλήσεως) for the people, please speak" (Acts 13:15). Paul then addresses the congregation, delivering an apologetic for belief in Jesus that ends with a prophetic warning (13:16-41). On the basis of this verse Lane maintains that the phrase *ὁ λόγος παρακλήσεως* "appears to be an idiomatic, fixed expression for a sermon in Jewish-hellenistic and early Christian circles."¹⁴ Similarly, Wills states that it is "quite likely that the term took on a fixed meaning as the sermon of the worship service in early Christianity."¹⁵ In support of this claim Perdelwitz cites Acts 15:32. There the Christ-followers in Antioch were "encouraged through many words" (*διὰ λόγου πολλοῦ παρεκάλεσαν*) by Judas and Silas who had arrived from Jerusalem.¹⁶ Lane buttresses it by reference

¹³ Especially see Richard Perdelwitz, "Das literarische Problem des Hebräerbriefs," ZNW 11 (1910): 59-78; Hartwig Thyen, *Der Stil der Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Homilie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 16-18; James Swetnam, "On the Literary Genre of the 'Epistle' to the Hebrews," *NovT* 11 (1969): 261-69; Lawrence Wills, "The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," *HTR* 77/3-4 (1984): 278-83; David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 212-14; William L. Lane, "Hebrews: A Sermon in Search of a Setting," *SWJT* 28/1 (1985): 13-15; idem, *Hebrews* (2 vols.; WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991), lxx-lxxv.

¹⁴ Lane, *Hebrews*, lxx.

¹⁵ Wills, "Form of the Sermon," 280. This claim is accepted without criticism by C. Clifton Black II, "The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills," *HTR* 81:1 (1988): 1-18.

¹⁶ Perdelwitz, "Problem," 64.

to 1 Timothy 4:13.¹⁷ Timothy is told to "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ). Lane notes that preaching followed the public reading of Scripture in the liturgical pattern of the synagogue which was taken over by early Christ-followers. He contends that this verse reflects that pattern and "exhortation" therefore refers to the duty of preaching sermons.¹⁸ In Hebrews 13:22 the author states: "I exhort you brothers, bear with the word of exhortation (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως); for I have even written to you briefly." Because the author here is thought to refer to the body of his writing as a λόγος παρακλήσεως it is classified as a sermon.

Both the assumptions and particulars of this line of argumentation are flawed. To begin, most scholars who make these claims do not specify what they mean by a sermon or homily. The designation is vacuous if it is not distinguishable from other forms of public speaking and instruction. Wills acknowledges the legitimacy of this criticism but inexplicably fails to identify any distinctive features of sermons. He instead moves straight into a form-critical analysis of the features peculiar to the specific form of sermon he calls the "word of exhortation." Arguably this is to beg the question. One might consider this criticism pedantic since most people know what a sermon is. But therein lies the danger. Scholars who make this argument usually

¹⁷ Lane, *Hebrews*, 568.

¹⁸ Wills cites a third text in support of the claim, *Apostolic Constitutions* 8:5 ("Form of the Sermon," 280). There a liturgy for the ordination of bishops is described. After the candidate has been ordained and enthroned he pronounces a blessing on the congregation. In his first act as a bishop he then speaks to the people "words of exhortation" (λόγους παρακλήσεως). This text is late and of dubious value in establishing first-century usage. Nonetheless, it should be observed that these "words of exhortation" are delivered on a special occasion and are not the normal sermon in a weekly worship service. Nor is it clear that they even refer to a sermon in this context. What the new bishop says at this point in the ceremony is also referred to as "his word of doctrine," suggesting that what he says may be a set liturgical pronouncement, perhaps a confession of faith. Other texts frequently cited in support are 1 Macc 10:24; 2 Macc 7:24; 15:11 but it is unclear how any of them could possibly support the thesis. Indeed, the first of these passages specifically refers to the writing of a letter!

assume a certain understanding of what a sermon is that is obvious to their readers: a sermon is the kind of religious monologue one hears in the weekly worship services of modern churches and synagogues. But it must be asked whether sermons of this sort were a central feature of the worship in first-century synagogues.¹⁹

Sabbath Instruction in Second Temple Synagogues

The extant evidence for Second Temple synagogue practices is sparse.²⁰ Many older studies confuse the investigation by asserting that practices attested only later were current during the Second Temple period (most commonly the practice of *lectio continua* following the triennial reading cycle).²¹ Others indiscriminately discuss all the evidence from antiquity together with little regard for chronology.²² Not only does this give readers anachronistic impressions, it makes it difficult to discern what the relevant evidence does *not* include for a given period. Arguably the formal synagogue sermon can be numbered among those activities not attested in the first century. This would account for why "very little is known of ancient homiletic

¹⁹ Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (RGRW 122; Leiden: Brill, 1994) contends that the synagogue was not a place of worship during the Second Temple period. However, her definition of what constitutes worship is too narrowly defined. For a critique of McKay's position see Pieter W. van der Horst, *Japheth in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Hellenism in Antiquity* (CBET 32; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 55-82.

²⁰ For recent overviews, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 124-59; Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 169-235; Donald D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period* (SBLDS 169; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 399-404.

²¹ The most influential example is Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Martin Goodman; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973-87), 2.447-54.

²² E.g., Shmuel Safrai, "Gathering in the Synagogues on Festivals, Sabbaths and Weekdays," in *Ancient Synagogues in Israel: Third-Seventh Century C.E.* (ed. Rachel Hachlili; Oxford: B.A.R., 1989), 7-15. Contrary to the book's subtitle the focus of this essay is not confined to the third through seventh centuries but on "ancient times." The danger of anachronism can flow both ways; what is attested earlier does not always represent later practice.

practice till the time of the Talmud."²³ The evidence consistently points to the reading of the Law as the central component of synagogue activity. Instruction about the Law was also common but it may be misleading to refer to the usual form this instruction took as a sermon. Of course, everything depends on definitions. If one defines "sermon" so broadly as to include any kind of religious instruction or proclamation, then there were sermons but they were not often like the sermons with which modern Jews and Christians are familiar. The chief exception would be the evangelistic proclamations recorded in Acts after which some modern evangelistic preaching is modeled. If one insists that the result of all preaching is a sermon, then obviously there were sermons—but not necessarily of the relevant type. Our concern here is specifically with the regular form of teaching that took place in the weekly worship service. It is this kind of "sermon" that Hebrews is alleged to be.

The chief evidence cited for the prominence of sermons in Second Temple synagogue practice is Luke 4:16-30 and Acts 13:15-47. The relevant evidence outside the New Testament is typically ignored or assumed to be consistent with a superficial reading of these passages. A very different picture emerges if we closely examine the non-biblical evidence and look at these New Testament in that light.

To begin, the Theodotus inscription says that the synagogue it once adorned was built "for reading of the Law and for teaching of the commandments" (εἰς ἀν[άγ]νωσ[ιν] νόμου καὶ εἰς [δ]ιδασχὴν ἐντολῶν) (CIJ 2.1404, 4-5). Josephus similarly says that the seventh day is given over to "the study of our customs and Law" (τῇ μαθήσει τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐθῶν καὶ νόμου) (*Antiq.* 16.43). Elsewhere he says

²³ Charles Perrot, "The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 158.

the Jewish people cease from work on the seventh day for "the hearing of the Law" (τὴν ἀκρόασιν τοῦ νόμου) and to "thoroughly learn it exactly" (ἀκριβῶς ἐκμανθάνειν) (C. Ap. 2.175). He also indicates that it was customary for the synagogue meeting to end for the day in time for the midday meal (*Vita*, 279).²⁴ These texts mention teaching, study and learning in relation to the reading of the Law but they do not indicate how this instruction was conveyed. Discourses similar to modern sermons are not ruled out, but neither are they suggested. Other modes of instruction and study could just as easily be in view.

The greatest amount of evidence is found in the writings of Philo. Several times he describes the Sabbath as a day devoted to "philosophizing," discussion of Jewish "ancestral philosophy" (i.e. the Law) and the cultivation of virtue (*Opif.* 128; *Legat.* 156; *Somn.* 2.127; *Spec.* 2.62; *Mos.* 2.216). Twice he refers to *proseuchai* (i.e. synagogues) as διδασκαλεῖα, schools (*Spec.* 2.62; *Mos.* 2.216). This highly intellectual portrayal of Sabbath activity is idealized and clearly part of an attempt to convince Gentile readers that the Jewish people are a uniquely philosophical race. This does not mean that it is completely inaccurate though. It could reflect the experience of elites like Philo who undoubtedly exercised some influence on the practices of their local synagogues.²⁵ It is even more likely that Philo has put a "philosophical" façade on common synagogue activities. This is supported by the fact that some of these

²⁴ This meal may have been a common part of the Sabbath observance. See *Antiq.* 14.214; 16.164 (taking ἀνδρῶν to refer to a banqueting hall); *Jub.* 2:21; Philo, *Contempl.* 35-37, 40 (cf. *m. Avot* 3:18; 6:4-5). Peter Richardson has recently argued that synagogues began as Jewish *collegia* in the Western Diaspora and were imported to Palestine and the east ("Early Synagogues as Collegia in the Diaspora and Palestine," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* [ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London and New York: Routledge, 1996], 90-109). If one accepts this or merely the more modest claim that synagogues shared enough the functions of the *collegia* to be perceived as such by outsiders, then it is highly probable that feasting would have been a common activity in the synagogue, though not necessarily weekly. On this see Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 74-83.

²⁵ Cf. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 82-83.

same passages mention particulars of the service which are corroborated, in part, by outside sources while others portray the same activities without the façade. Of particular interest for our purposes are his statements about how instruction was conveyed.

Philo indicates that on the Sabbath someone "of special experience" (τις τῶν ἐμπειροτάτων) would stand and "explain" (ὕφηγεῖται) what is best and profitable (*Spec.* 2.62). Similarly, retrojecting contemporary practice into the Mosaic period, he says that the people philosophize with the ruler (Moses) "explaining and teaching" (ὕφηγουμένου καὶ διδάσκοντος) in what they should say and do (*Mos.* 2.215; cf. 2.216). In these two passages the reading of the Law is not explicitly mentioned but it is the explanation of the Law that lies behind Philo's façade. Other passages employing the same terminology make this clear. The most concise of these says that the Jewish people assemble on the Sabbath "for the explanation of the Law" (πρὸς τὰς τῶν νόμων ὑφηγήσεις) (*Legat.* 157). Another says that a priest or one of the elderly men in the congregation "reads the holy laws to them and after each one interprets (καθ' ἑκάστον ἐξηγεῖται) until about late afternoon" (*Hypoth.* 7.13). This appears to describe a kind of running commentary in which a pericope is read and explained, followed by the reading and explanation of another—and so on until the afternoon (presumably modeled upon Neh. 8:7-8).

Philo again mentions the central feature of Sabbath worship in a quotation from a critic of the Jewish community. The critic asks whether enemy attack or natural disaster could dissuade Jews not to gather on the Sabbath "reading the holy books and permitting exposition of anything that is not clear (εἴ τι μὴ τρανὲς εἴη διαπτύσσοντες) and passing time in leisure by lengthy discussion (μακρογορίας) of

[your] ancestral philosophy" (*Somn.* 2.127). The noun μακρολογία carries overtones of long-windedness and tedium and could refer either to a single long discourse or to a lengthy discussion between several individuals. So it is not clear whether this passage subsumes the reading and explication of the Law under "discussion of the ancestral philosophy" or whether a subsequent third activity is being alluded to. If the former then, the wording of this passage would not be incompatible with the idea that someone delivered a sermon. However, it should be understood in conjunction with *Hypothetica* 7.13 as a probable reference to the running commentary which lasted into the afternoon.

On the other hand, if by "lengthy discussion" Philo refers to a third Sabbath activity, then this would be a time of open discussion centered on the "ancestral philosophy." Taken in this way the passage supports Binder's claim that "the process of interpreting scripture was a community affair" in which the "other members of the congregation were not passive participants."²⁶ However, Binder bases this claim exclusively on the New Testament and ignores Philo's repeated statement that the congregation is silent during the reading and explanation of the Law except for the occasional utterance of approval (*Hypoth.* 7.13; *Spec.* 2.62; cf. *Prob.* 81; *Contempl.* 31). But Philo also describes the Sabbath as a time for "philosophizing" about the Law (*Spec.* 2.61; *Mos.* 2.215), an activity that is not most naturally understood as a passive affair. The tension between these descriptions is resolved if we envision a time of open discussion that took place after the formal reading of the Law and its attending explanation. This would also account for the abundant evidence from the New Testament indicating that both in Palestine and the Diaspora the synagogue was a

²⁶ Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 403.

place where traveling teachers could expect opportunity to proclaim their message. It would be rather presumptuous to show up in synagogues and always expect to be allowed to deliver the weekly instruction. But if there was normally a time of discussion after the reading of the Law and its exposition, then it makes sense that missionaries in the Christ-movement could have expected an opportunity to share their message then.

Philo's description of the Essene synagogue service is very similar to his descriptions of the common (i.e. non-sectarian) Sabbath service. In both cases the congregants are said to sit arranged in rows according to their ages attentive to the reading of the holy books and cultivation of virtue. In both cases somebody with notable experience gives instruction. The one difference is that a single individual both reads and offers explanatory commentary in the common service (*Hypoth.* 7.13) whereas in the Essene service one person takes the books and reads "but another of special experience comes forward and explains whatever is not familiar" (ἕτερος δὲ τῶν ἐμπειροτάτων ὅσα μὴ γνώριμα παρελθὼν ἀναδιδάσκει) (*Prob.* 82). However, the central focus of the instruction seems to be the same: the explanation of what is not clear in the text (cf. *Somn.* 2.127) and moral instruction (cf. *Prob.* 83).

None of the evidence discussed so far suggests that synagogue instruction normally took the form of sermons. It focused on explaining the meaning of individual laws, clarifying interpretive difficulties and promoting behavior in concert with Jewish mores. A sermon can contain these elements but the overall impression one gets is not of "speeches of exhortation, often using arguments based on the

interpretation of biblical passages, directed to insiders."²⁷ Rather, the performative reading of scripture was far more central and the instruction was not in the form of a speech but a running commentary on the individual pericopae. Josephus and Philo intimate that the primary focus was on aspects of the text that would not be readily understood from a simple reading. A further dimension to this is added when we look at the one clear instance of someone in the New Testament delivering the regular synagogue instruction.

In Luke 4:17-21 Jesus reads a paragraph from the prophet Isaiah and offers a commentary on it. Luke does not report the content of the teaching but he summarizes it by saying that Jesus "began to say to them" (ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν πρὸς αὐτοὺς) that "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21). The emphatic "began to say" indicates that Jesus repeatedly announced the fulfillment of what he had read. It should be remembered that there were no chapters and verses to demarcate textual units. The quotation Luke gives is almost certainly just the first section of the passage read by Jesus.²⁸ In concert with the descriptions from Philo, it appears that Jesus read a passage and then offered commentary on its individual pericopae. Something like a sermon does not readily correspond to this pattern but the basic form of the Qumran *pesharim* does. The *pesharim* quote a passage of scripture followed by an introductory phrase such as "Its interpretation is."

Following this there is anything from a couple of sentences to a couple of paragraphs

²⁷ This is the definition of the sermon or homily given by David E. Aune, "Homily," in *Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, 219. Unfortunately he derives it almost entirely from the parallelism between Acts 13:15 and Hebrews 13:22 (see below), thereby begging the question whether either of these texts are helpfully classified as sermons. He mentions a couple of the passages from Philo but only after he has determined that sermons were common, this despite his own admission that "prior to the Mishnah (ca. 200 C.E.), fixed sermonic patterns did not exist" (p. 219).

²⁸ Compare the citation formula in *m. Megillah* 3:4-6. Luke quotes a longer section of text for his citation but otherwise the same formula is used.

of interpretive commentary before the process is repeated. Often the interpretation seeks to show how the prophetic text is fulfilled. In this light it looks that both the *pesharim* and Jesus have adapted a basic model of instruction common in Palestinian Sabbath services.²⁹ While much of the content of the *pesharim* and Jesus' message would be unique to them, the basic form of instruction is not.

A final passage from Philo is the one piece of evidence that supports the notion that some Jewish groups may have utilized something like the sermon as their regular means of Sabbath instruction. Philo reports that when the Therapeutae assembled on the Sabbath they sat in order according to their age with their hands inside their robe, the right placed above the heart and the left at their side (*Contempl.* 30; cf. *Somn.* 2.126). They would show support of what was said with facial expressions or a nod of the head (*Contempl.* 31). Instruction is delivered by "the eldest man who is also experienced in the doctrines [of the group]" (ὁ πρεσβύτατος καὶ τῶν δογμάτων ἐμπειρότατος) (*Contempl.* 31). While similar to Philo's reports for non-sectarian and Essene services, here he appears to refer to someone who holds a formal position as the chief instructor within the group. The instructor is described as "discussing" (διαλέγεται) with a quiet and composed voice and in a reasoned and thoughtful manner (μετὰ λογισμοῦ καὶ φρονήσεως). No mention is made regarding

²⁹ They could also be related to the explanations given in the nightly reading of the Law described in 1QS 6.7, though it is doubtful that the instruction given in these sessions took a very different form than that of the Sabbath service. The pattern is described there as: לקרוא כספר ולדרוש משפט. This can be translated in a way that closely corresponds to Philo's descriptions of both common and Essene synagogue instruction: "to read the book and explain the law/regulation." The translators are split about whether to render the second phrase as I have (e.g. Martinez) or to render it as referring to the general activity "study the Law" (e.g. Vermes). The decision largely depends on whether one takes מדרש משפט to be synonymous with דרוש בחורה ("studies the Law") in 6.6 and מדרש החורה ("study of the Law") in 8.15 or understands it to refer to a specific aspect of this activity, namely the exposition of the particular regulations within the Law. The latter seems much more likely to me (cf. CD 7.7-8 where משפט and חורה both occur and משפט refers to a specific law within the חורה).

the reading of any books, though that is presupposed.³⁰ Philo makes the point that the instructor does not make a great display of cleverness as do the rhetoricians and sophists. In contrast he discusses "the exact meaning (ἀκριβείαν) by closely examining and interpreting the thoughts," undoubtedly referring to a text that has been read by him or someone else.

The instructor's discourse appears to be focused on explaining the intricacies of the text and any ambiguities in its meaning. This is the same basic point Philo makes when he says that instruction in common and Essene synagogues focused on explaining anything that was unclear or unfamiliar in the text. The description here recalls Josephus' comment that Jews gather on the Sabbath to listen to the Law so as to "thoroughly learn it exactly" (ἀκριβῶς ἐκμανθάνειν) (*C. Ap.* 2.175). As described by Philo, the Sabbath instruction among the Therapeutae shared the same basic goals as that of other Jewish groups.

The verb Philo employs to refer to the Sabbath instruction of the Therapeutae is διαλέγομαι. This word can refer to a discussion (or dispute) between two individuals (cf. Mark 9:34). Luke frequently uses it to refer to Paul teaching in the synagogues and elsewhere (Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 20:7, 9; 24:12, 25).³¹ In several of these passages the word carries the sense of "reasoning with" and implies, as context makes clear, that there was a certain amount of interaction between the speaker and audience. But if Philo's description of the Therapeutae is accurate, the congregants were silent and expressed approval only through facial expressions and nods of the head. This contrasts with his portrayal of non-sectarian services in which

³⁰ Cf. Acts 17:2 in which Paul "reasoned with them from the scriptures" (διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν).

³¹ In the New Testament the verb is only used in three other places: Mark 9:34; Heb 12:5; Jude 1:9.

congregants uttered the occasional word of approval ("Amen!"). What is distinctive about their Sabbath service is that they reserve the teaching role exclusively for a particular leader within the community. Philo's description of how the instruction was carried out points to an eloquent monologue that was perhaps more composed and "professional" than what he experienced in non-sectarian synagogues. It is here that we come closest to finding something that resembles a sermon. But, as in other Jewish communities, the instruction was designed to present an exact interpretation of the Law (and perhaps other sacred books). It is likely that the Sabbath instruction among the Therapeutae was a variation of the common form of running commentary focused on explicating specific laws, clarifying ambiguities and explaining the meaning of those aspects of the text that were considered to hold symbolic meaning.

There is no reason to doubt the broad outlines of Philo's description.

However, his portrayal of the instructor's discourse must be taken with a grain of salt. Running through all of his discussions of Sabbath worship and instruction Philo endeavors to describe Jews as a distinctively philosophical people. This reaches its climax in *De Vita Contemplativa* where Philo portrays the Therapeutae as the most philosophical Jews and therefore the most philosophical of all people. Philo's contrast between the instructor's well-reasoned discourse and the exhibitions of the rhetoricians and sophists reflects the common disdain that philosophers felt toward these groups. The instructor is being portrayed as the ideal philosophical teacher who refrains from the rhetorical tricks of the sophists. While Philo's descriptions of both the Therapeutae and their instructor appear to be based on some first-hand knowledge of the group, they have been exaggerated to form the climax of his apologetic for the philosophical prowess of the Jewish people. Whereas Philo depicts

the instructor as delivering the well-reasoned and eloquent discourse of a philosopher, in reality his mode of teaching was probably very similar to what one found in other Jewish communities.

In summary, Hebrews does not resemble the kind of running commentary that seems to have been the dominant form of synagogue instruction during the first-century. The evidence outside the New Testament gives us little warrant for believing that sermons of the type assumed by most writers on Hebrews were common at this time. This is a major difficulty for the hypothesis that Hebrews is a sermon. Moreover, though the extant evidence for synagogue practice is relatively sparse, a rich variety of terminology is preserved to refer to synagogue instruction. In the Theodotus inscription, Josephus and Philo it is either included in the central activity of reading the Law, referred to by the noun διδαχή or described by verbs like διαλέγομαι, ἀναδιδάσκω, διαπτύσσω, ἐξηγέομαι and (most frequently) ὑφηγέομαι. Conspicuously absent is anything resembling "word of exhortation." This does not disprove the claim that "word of exhortation" was an "idiomatic, fixed expression for a sermon" but it does call it into question. We must now assess the line of argumentation that was summarized earlier. This process will reveal some important insight into how the author and readers of Hebrews would have understood the phrase "word of exhortation."

New Testament "Sermons" and Prophetic Exhortation

Beginning with the texts cited to bolster the central claim, it is not as clear as Lane suggests that 1 Timothy 4:13 refers to three aspects of the liturgy employed by

Christ-followers during their meetings. It could be a simple list of tasks that Timothy should be faithful to continue as part of a ministry that was not confined to the weekly meeting. In this case "exhortation" would refer to the exercise of a spiritual gift related to prophecy (see below) and/or the pastoral visitation of Christ-followers in various congregations (cf. Acts 14:22; 15:32; 16:40; 20:1-2). But Lane is right to assume that "the reading" (τῇ ἀναγνώσει) almost certainly refers to the public reading of scripture at the heart of synagogue worship. It does not follow that the weekly service is all that is in view here. The performative reading of scripture was so central to the synagogue liturgy that it could refer to the entire service *pars pro toto* while exhortation and teaching refer to aspects of ministry that occur in other settings (cf. 1 Tim 6:2; Titus 1:9). Nonetheless, it remains possible that "reading, exhortation, teaching" does refer to the worship service of Christ-followers. But would not "teaching" be a more likely reference to a sermon than "exhortation"? If "exhortation" refers to the sermon in the liturgy, then to what does "teaching" refer? But it is unlikely that either refers to a sermon in distinction from other elements of the service. It would be more plausible to see the three terms together comprising a reference to the time of instruction, with the latter two highlighting the purposes for which scripture was read and commented on. This should be apparent in light of the evidence for synagogue instruction discussed above. Exhortation would be part of any sermon and one of the purposes for delivering one, but 1 Timothy 4:13 does not give us reason to believe that exhortation is synonymous with a sermon. Elsewhere in the pastoral letters, however, we are given reason to believe that their author would have seen exhortation as one of the things done as part of proclaiming the word—along with reproof, rebuke and teaching (2 Tim 4:2).

Presumably the reason Perdelwitz believes Acts 15:32 supports the thesis that λόγος παρακλήσεως is a term for a sermon is that the phrase λόγου πολλοῦ παρεκάλεσαν could be understood to mean that Judas and Silas delivered a "long message." However, the verb includes both Judas and Silas as subjects. If a single sermon or "long message" is in view, then somehow both men would have had to deliver it. But it should be kept in mind that πολὺς may denote quantity, particularly when it modifies nouns that can imply plurality.³² Also, v. 33 indicates that Judas and Silas stayed in Antioch for a while. Rather than see one long message delivered by two individuals it is preferable to understand the phrase in question as indicating that they encouraged the people through many "words." Were these "words" a series of sermons in the worship service of the church? That is doubtful. The verse mentions Judas and Silas by name but prior to mentioning what they did in Antioch it states: "and they being prophets" (καὶ αὐτοὶ προφῆται ὄντες). This is immediately followed by the prepositional phrase "through many words they encouraged (διὰ λόγου πολλοῦ παρεκάλεσαν) the brothers." Their status as prophets is emphasized and the encouragement they gave is associated with that status. In other words, they encouraged the brothers "through many words" *because* they were prophets. The word λόγος can be used to refer to oracles and other kinds of revelation (cf. 1 Cor 12:8).³³ That is how it should be understood here. The words which encouraged the Antiochene church were oracles of some kind delivered by the prophets Judas and Silas. Acts 15:32 gives no support to the thesis that λόγος

³² Cf. BAGD, 687.

³³ See LSJ, 1059 (VII, 1).

παρακλήσεως was a fixed term for a sermon but it does raise the possibility that the phrase refers to prophetic activity.

The heart of the argument really centers on Acts 13:14-41. Wills refers to Paul's speech here as a missionary sermon that in the narrative setting is presented "as a typical synagogue homily."³⁴ But how does Wills know it is typical? This is the first example examined in his essay, so it is not because he has canvassed the evidence outside the New Testament to determine what was typical. The fact is that Wills does not present any evidence to warrant saying that Paul's message is presented as a *typical* synagogue homily. Furthermore, even if there were formal synagogue sermons of the type he envisions, there is reason to believe that the message Paul delivered in Acts 13 was something different.

Luke specifies that the reading from the Law and Prophets had already been completed when a message is conveyed to Paul and his companions inquiring whether any of them have a "word of exhortation" for the people. Philo indicates that the regular Sabbath teaching would have been delivered by the same person(s) who read from the scriptural scrolls except in the case of the Essenes. In Luke 4:16-30 Jesus both reads from the scroll and offers the interpretation, evidence that the same practice was found in Palestine as well. We cannot be absolutely certain that all synagogues would have followed this pattern but the fact that it is attested in both Egypt and Palestine suggests it was widespread. When Luke says that the reading of the Law and Prophets was completed this would seem to be a way of saying that the time of reading and formal instruction had come to a close. If the formal synagogue instruction constitutes a sermon, then the sermon is already over before Paul stands

³⁴ Wills, "Form of the Sermon," 278.

up to speak and "word of exhortation" cannot refer to a synagogue sermon in this passage. But even if this synagogue followed the pattern of the Essenes the fact remains that Paul and his companions are not asked if any of them would like to interpret what was read, which we might expect if this were a regular synagogue homily.

Earlier it was noted that Philo may indicate that there was a time of open discussion following the formal reading and interpretation of scripture. This passage corroborates that possibility. What appears to have happened is that the synagogue leaders noticed that Paul and his companions were traveling Jewish teachers. After the formal reading and instruction they extended an invitation to them to address the congregation. This would have been natural as a matter of courtesy as well as curiosity to know what they were going around teaching. It may even be that Paul and his companions were asked if they would like to speak because they were thought to be itinerant prophets. In any case Luke depicts Paul as engaged in prophetic activity. He also gives us reason to believe that "word of exhortation" would have been understood to refer to prophetic discourse.

Exhortation as Prophecy

Recall that earlier in the book Luke refers to a disciple named Joseph who was nicknamed Βαρνάβας (4:36). This is a straightforward transliteration of the Aramaic בר־נבא with the addition of the final sigma customarily added to transliterated Semitic names that do not end with a hard consonant. The Aramaic phrase means "son of prophecy." This is a fitting epithet since Joseph/Barnabas is counted among the

group of prophets in the church in Antioch (13:1). He is also said to have been set apart by the Holy Spirit to accompany Paul on the journey that leads them to Psidian Antioch (13:2). Paul and Barnabas are depicted as being sent from the church in Antioch by the Holy Spirit (13:4), something which suggests a prophetic commission. In the first stop of the journey there is a confrontation with a false prophet named Bar-Jesus (13:6) who seems to be the antithesis of Barnabas, the "son of prophesy." In the ensuing encounter Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit (13:9) and prophetically condemns Bar-Jesus to blindness (13:11), a sign which leads the proconsul to believe the proclamation about Jesus. In these various ways Barnabas and Paul seem to be depicted by Luke as itinerant prophets. Significantly, all of this is recounted in the narrative immediately preceding the story in which Paul gives his "word of exhortation" in the synagogue at Psidian Antioch. Moreover, the message Paul is reported to have delivered culminates in a manner reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets, ending with a prophetic warning from Habakkuk 1:5.

It is significant that Luke translates Βαρνάβας as υἱὸς παρακλήσεως (4:36), usually rendered into English as "son of exhortation." Some scholars have thought that either Luke misunderstood the meaning of Joseph's nickname or that some other Aramaic term lies behind the Greek transliteration. But there is nothing to preclude what should be an obvious implication: among early Christ-followers παρακλήσις sometimes carried connotations of Spirit-inspired *prophetic* exhortation or comfort. A supporting argument for this could be derived from William Horbury's observations about how παρακλήσις is often linked with prophecy in early Jewish literature.³⁵

³⁵ William Horbury, *Jews and Christians: In Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 111-26, esp. 112, 115.

But more immediate support comes from the fact that Luke expressly identifies Barnabas as a prophet (13:1) and draws a contrast between the false prophet Bar-Jesus and the true prophets Joseph "Bar-Naba" and Paul (13:4-12). Luke clearly knew the proper meaning of Joseph's Aramaic nickname and believed that παράκλησις was an appropriate equivalent of נבִי. When Acts 13:15 is read in this context it is clear that the phrase λόγος παρακλήσεως was not understood by Luke as a technical term for a sermon. Rather, it was a reference to prophetic discourse of some kind.

Corroboration for this understanding of παράκλησις in the early Christ-movement comes from the letters of Paul. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 Paul says that the one who prophesies "speaks to people for upbuilding and exhortation and consolation" (οἰκοδομὴν καὶ παρακλήσιν καὶ παραμυθίαν). Later in the same chapter he says that all in the Corinthian congregation are able to prophecy "in order that all may learn and all be exhorted" (ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν καὶ πάντες παρακαλῶνται) (14:31).³⁶ 1 Corinthians 14 is the most extended discussion of prophecy in the New Testament and Paul clearly sees παράκλησις as one of the chief products of prophetic activity. It is probably fair to assume that παράκλησις was considered the chief purpose of prophecy since it is the only product/purpose that Paul mentions in both verses, verses which serve to bookend the discussion of prophecy. In a related passage Paul even indicates that exhortation could be a specific spiritual gift (Romans 12:8). On the basis of this verse Horbury argues that παράκλησις could refer to a gift of the Spirit distinguishable from prophecy but

³⁶ In light of Paul's comments in these verses Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:14-40 looks like an example of early Christian prophecy (esp. note v. 40). Of course, it has long been recognized that his condemnation of the generation as sinful and call to repentance bear strong similarities with the messages of the Old Testament prophets.

related to it.³⁷ But rather than a gift distinguishable *from* prophecy, it may be that παράκλησις is a gift distinguishable *within* the broader gift of prophecy. In Romans 12:7 "the giver" and "the compassionate" appear to reflect subcategories of those endowed with the gift of "ministry." In light of 1 Corinthians 14:3, 31 it is possible that "the exhorter" (ὁ παρακαλῶν) in Romans 12:8 is a subcategory of those endowed with the gift of prophecy (12:6).

There is, then, a strong case for understanding the phrase ὁ λόγος παρακλήσεως in Acts 13:15 to be related to prophetic activity. We should be careful about saying that λόγος παρακλήσεως is therefore a technical term. After all, the construction λόγος + X is common and does not usually refer to a specific form of speech or literature (cf. Heb 4:2; 4:12; 7:28; 13:7). Furthermore, the association between prophecy and παράκλησις does not prevent New Testament writers to employ the term to express the full array of its common uses. There is, then, no necessary link between Acts 13:15 and Hebrews 13:22. In the latter passage the phrase could mean nothing more than an "encouraging word." Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that in Hebrews the phrase λόγος παρακλήσεως was also related to prophetic activity.³⁸

One of the key but usually neglected exhortations in the epistle is the warning "do not refuse the one who is speaking" and do not reject "the one who is revealing/warning (τὸν χρηματίζοντα) from heaven" (12:25). The verb χρηματίζω refers explicitly to divine revelation, often to revealed warning and/or instruction (cf.

³⁷ Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 115.

³⁸ This possibility is not considered by Walter Übelacker, "Paraenesis or Paraclesis—Hebrews as a Test Case," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen; BZNW 125; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 319-52.

Matt 2:12, 22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22).³⁹ It is used in this sense earlier in Hebrews when Noah is described as having been warned of imminent cataclysmic disaster and given opportunity to be saved from it (Heb 11:7). In Hebrews 12:25 the author is urging his recipients to comply with a similar prophetic warning which was being proclaimed within their community. The community is clearly familiar with works of the Holy Spirit in their midst (cf. 2:4; 6:4), so there is nothing improbable about the author mentioning prophetic activity in this way. Like the warning Noah received, the oracle they are urged to heed warns of cataclysmic disaster. An important aspect of the author's rhetorical strategy is to urge compliance with the oracle. He believes that the oracle points to an impending disaster that will shake both earth and heaven (12:26-27). This is undoubtedly associated with the belief that the return of Jesus is imminent (10:37). Those who obey the oracle will be counted faithful and will be saved (9:28; 10:38). Those who do not will be counted among the adversaries of God and destroyed (10:27, 38; 12:25). Apostatizing from the Christ-community is to identify with the rebellious wilderness generation (3:7-4:13) and Esau (12:16) who represent those who hear a divine message but do not obey (4:2; cf. 2:1-2; 12:19). In the author's view apostasy is tantamount to counting one's self among the adversaries of God. That is why his warnings (6:4-8; 10:26-31) carry such a strong sense of urgency.

In this light Hebrews 13:22 looks like an instance of the association between *παράκλησις* and prophecy in the early Christ-movement. The question is whether *λόγος παρακλήσεως* refers to the epistle itself as the translations and commentators almost universally assume, or whether it refers to the oracle mentioned in 12:25. The

³⁹ See BAGD, 885.

verse states in full: Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἀνέχεσθε τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, καὶ γὰρ διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα ὑμῖν. On the assumption that the "word of exhortation" must refer to the epistle itself, most recent translations render the second phrase as bear with "my word of exhortation" (NRSV, NIV), "this word of exhortation" (NASB), "dies Wort der Ermahnung" (Luther [1984]) and "this message of encouragement" (NAB). But each of these translations inserts an adjective ("my") or demonstrative pronoun ("this") to make the phrase refer to the epistle. The starkness of the Greek is better preserved by the venerable translation "suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words" (KJV). The more formally equivalent translation leaves open the possibility that the word of exhortation the readers are asked to bear is something other than the epistle itself.

The issue hinges in part on how καὶ γὰρ διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα ὑμῖν is understood. The interpretation implicit in the modern translations takes this phrase as indicating the bearableness of the word of exhortation. That is, the readers are exhorted to listen to the word of exhortation since it is not overly long and therefore should not be burdensome. Ironically, the modern Bible translations testify against this view. If "the word of exhortation" is the epistle itself then we would expect this phrase to be modified with just the sort of pronoun or adjective that the translators so generously supply. But there are no such words in the text to ensure the referent is understood as the epistle itself.

The phrase καὶ γὰρ διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα ὑμῖν could be understood in two other ways. The first would be as an indication that the author has not written all that he could in support of bearing with the word of exhortation, though what he has written should be sufficient. Earlier in the epistle the author expresses frustration

about being unable to fully explain matters because the readers have not developed their knowledge as much as they should have (5:11-12), so such an expression would not be out of place. The entire verse could then be translated as: "I exhort you brothers, bear with the word of exhortation even though I have written you only briefly." Against this is the fact that elsewhere in the New Testament the idiom καὶ γὰρ means *for even, for or in fact* but nowhere else conveys the sense of *even though*. Outside the New Testament the idiom is attested to mean *and in fact, and indeed, for even* and *for also* but as far as I have been able to determine not *even though*.⁴⁰

Whereas the second interpretation demands a rare and possibly unattested meaning for the idiom, the first treats it as if it were no different than a solitary γὰρ. In a few New Testament passages there is not much to distinguish καὶ γὰρ from a solitary γὰρ, but the author of Hebrews is not generally a writer to disregard distinctions. Given his proficiency with the Greek language we should assume that he intends here to convey something slightly different than would have been conveyed had he used γὰρ instead of the idiom καὶ γὰρ. According to Smyth, clauses introduced by καὶ γὰρ tend to add a new and important thought to a sentence with greater emphasis and less dependence than those introduced by γὰρ alone.⁴¹ A third way to understand the phrase takes it in the sense of *for even* or *for also*. In this case the author urges the recipients to bear with the word of exhortation and points out that he has even written them briefly to secure their compliance. Understood in this way the phrase cites the fact that the author has expended the effort to send them an epistle as itself constituting a reason to heed the word of

⁴⁰ See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (rev. Gordon M. Messing; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), §2813-§2815.

⁴¹ Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §2814.

exhortation. This is either a subtle appeal to the bond of friendship, something the author does in the immediately preceding context in the one other instance where he directly says "I exhort" (παρακαλῶ) (13:18-19), or it is a subtle appeal to the author's authority. If this interpretation is accepted, then we can translate the verse along the lines of "I exhort you, brothers, bear the word of exhortation; for I have even written to you briefly" or, possibly, "...for even I have written to you briefly" (the latter is less likely since there is no emphatic ἐγώ).

In my opinion the combination of grammatical and contextual reasons best supports the third option. The "word of exhortation" refers to something other than the epistle itself. The readers are deliberating a prophetic word of exhortation and the author urges them to obey it. In the author's opinion this is literally a life or death issue for his audience, whether they see it as such or not. In light of the association between prophecy and exhortation that has been documented here there can only be one referent in view, the oracle alluded to in 12:25. Hebrews 13:22 restates the earlier exhortation. To "bear the word of exhortation" is the equivalent of "do not refuse the one who is speaking" and do not reject "the one who is revealing/warning from heaven." This equivalency is even more transparent when we recognize that the verb ἀνέχω can mean to bear or endure in the sense of *hear* or *listen to willingly*. Thus the standard New Testament Greek lexicon translates ἀνέχεσθε τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως as "listen willingly to the word of exhortation."⁴²

⁴² BAGD, 66.

Conclusion

Beyond the verbal parallel with Acts 13:15, writers like Thyen, Wills and Lane offer no substantive evidence to support their contention that Hebrews is an example of a Hellenistic synagogue sermon. Instead they offer a mix of assertion, speculation, and circular reasoning to convince readers that not only is Hebrews a sermon, but it is a "typical," "most complete" or "extraordinarily long" example of the genre. Stegner was far more judicious when he began his study of ancient homilies with an example dated after 200 C.E. because "very little is known about the form or the content of such synagogue sermons" prior to that time.⁴³ The reason why we know so little about the form and content of synagogue sermons prior to 200 C.E. could be due to the accidents of history. But the fact is that we have little evidence to support the idea that there were sermons of the sort these scholars envision in first-century synagogues and churches at all. It is possible that the reason we know so little about sermons in the first two centuries is that they were not common means of synagogue instruction. There was instruction based on the biblical text but it appears to have usually taken the form of a running exegetical commentary.

Scholars have placed a great deal of weight on the parallel between the "word of exhortation" in Acts 13:15 and Hebrews 13:22. But when Paul's message in Acts 13 is examined in the larger context of the book it becomes clear that Luke has deliberately portrayed it as prophetic in nature. In Acts 13 Paul plays the role of the prophet proclaiming a Spirit-inspired "word of exhortation" that announces what

⁴³ William Richard Stegner, "The Ancient Jewish Synagogue Homily," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; SBLBS 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 51.

God has done, calls for repentance and promises judgement for the unrepentant.⁴⁴ In the early Christ-movement exhortation was considered both the product of prophetic activity and a spiritual gift (possibly a subcategory of prophecy). The author of Hebrews refers to a "word of exhortation" but it is by no means obvious that this is a reference to the epistle itself. If it is, then the author seems to use the phrase to indicate that he saw his epistle as the product of a prophetic gift that encourages obedience to the prophetic word the community is struggling with (12:25). But it is more likely that the epistle's final exhortation refers directly to this oracle. They are deliberating about a prophetic word of exhortation and they are encouraged to have faith to heed its warning. Reticence to obey this oracle seems to be a major factor in the situation the epistle was written to address. In the final exhortation of the book the author dispenses with argumentation and allusion and bluntly makes his point: listen willingly to the word of exhortation. The question that now presents itself is this: Are there any clues in Hebrews that indicate what the content of the prophetic word was? The next chapter will argue that there are and that these clues identify the location of the epistle's recipients.

⁴⁴ This is not just Luke's portrayal. 1 Thessalonians 2:3 provides evidence that Paul and his critics also viewed his proclamation in terms of prophetic activity — his critics charging him with false prophecy. On this see Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 111-26.

Chapter Seven

Rahab and the Other Heroes of Faith

Introduction

The basic contention of this thesis is that Hebrews is an epistle written to a group within the Jerusalem church whose members were experiencing strong tension, for the first time, between their identity as Jews and their hitherto nested identity as Christ-followers. The analysis of Chapter Six suggests that this tension was related to a prophetic oracle which the recipients had difficulty accepting and obeying. This view stands in direct opposition to the current consensus of scholarship which insists that the recipients of the epistle were Christians (possibly Jewish Christians, but not Jews) located in the Western Diaspora, most probably in Rome. On this view Hebrews is most commonly understood to have been written either to dissuade the addressees from abandoning their Christianity (on most accounts, to return to Judaism) or to persuade them to give up vestigial associations with Judaism and fully enter their Christianity. But as previous chapters have shown, the consensus of contemporary scholarship is badly mistaken on each of these points.

Contrary to the assertions of many scholars, what we learn about the addressees from the epistle itself is not in tension with what is known about the Jerusalem church. Quite the opposite, the information we can derive from Hebrews is not merely consistent with what is known of the Jerusalem church, at points there

is marked congruence. This is most discernable with respect to the socio-economic status of the recipients, the past persecution of their community and the apparent loss of respected leaders in the recent past. This constitutes a measure of support for the *prima facie* case in favor of locating the recipients in Jerusalem. Unlike the consensus of contemporary scholarship, the consensus of the first nineteen centuries of interpretation may not have been without foundation.

It was earlier stated that this thesis seeks to refurbish an old perspective. Traditional inferences and the consensus of the great nineteenth-century commentators concurred that Hebrews was written to Jerusalem. On this point they were correct. One might proceed to defend this proposition by refurbishing the arguments employed by the nineteenth-century commentators. Some of those arguments are indeed sound once purged of anachronism. One might also seek to defend the proposition by adjusting and correcting some of the arguments that Yadin, Kosmala and others cited in support of their novel ideas, though not necessarily drawing the conclusion that there was a link between the author or recipients and the Qumran community. But rather than follow either of these routes, this chapter will begin by offering new exegetical insight into one of the overarching purposes for which the epistle was written. When this purpose is identified it happens to also point to the epistle's destination in a rather startling way.

An Unexpected Starting Place

Over-familiarity with a text can blind scholars to some of its features. With respect to Hebrews the danger of blind spots is particularly acute with chapter 11, the supposedly "devotional aside on faith" most familiar to people. But it is precisely

here that we find vital clues about the overarching purposes of the epistle. In particular, we find this in the commendation of Rahab (11:31). There is far more to Rahab's commendation than first meets the eye but it has unfortunately been overlooked by traditional interpreters. Moreover, it has also been overlooked by feminist scholars who might be expected to have paid especially close attention to the women of Hebrews 11.

When *The Woman's Bible* was published at the end of the nineteenth century Hebrews was one of a small handful of biblical texts passed over in silence.¹ The Revising Committee apparently felt nothing in Hebrews was sufficiently relevant to women's concerns to warrant commentary. Two contemporary feminist compendiums inspired by *The Woman's Bible* rectify this omission by including commentaries on Hebrews.² Neither, however, adequately explores the role women play in this epistle. Instead each perpetuates the androcentric assumption that the women of Hebrews 11 are insignificant appendages to a list that is really concerned to commend male examples. The significant role that women play in the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews has consequently gone unappreciated. More specifically, feminist interpreters have been just as blind as traditional interpreters to literary clues that suggest the list was designed to culminate with the example of the woman Rahab.

¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ed., *The Woman's Bible: Parts 1 & II* (1895, 1898; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1972).

² Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *The Women's Bible Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1992); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Searching the Scriptures, Volume Two: A Feminist Commentary* (London: SCM, 1995). A similar work that does not list *The Woman's Bible* as a source of inspiration is Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans, eds., *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002). This commentary comes from a generally more conservative "evangelical feminist" perspective.

Close examination of Rahab's commendation shows that it is the climactic center of Hebrews 11 and helps us to understand the crucial role that the list of heroes plays in the author's rhetorical strategy. It is a key that helps unlock the meaning of epistle's cryptic climactic exhortation (13:13-14). The proper interpretation of Rahab's commendation also reveals one of the chief purposes for which Hebrews was written and happens to give us solid information regarding the location of the epistle's recipients. Thus, while Rahab's commendation is a most unexpected starting place it is an appropriate one.

Rahab in Traditional and Feminist Commentary

Why is Rahab commended in Hebrews' list of heroes? What role does her presence play in the author's rhetorical strategy? Traditional commentators universally explain Rahab's commendation by reference to her expression of faith in Israel's God as recorded in Joshua 2:9. It is assumed that the primary reason Rahab is on the list is that she is a Gentile and therefore her confession illustrates the universality of faith. She may also be on the list because she is a prostitute. By commending a Gentile prostitute—the lowest of the low—the author highlights the extent of Christian redemption.³ Along these lines, Rahab's commendation has also been considered an implicit argument from the lesser to the greater. By recognizing that God was with the Israelites and choosing to throw her lot in with them, Rahab demonstrates having faith in what is unseen (cf. Heb. 11:1). And "if a prostitute can

³ Justin Martyr mentions Rahab in this connection. The scarlet thread the spies gave to Rahab "manifested the symbol of the blood of Christ, by which those who were at one time harlots and unrighteous persons out of all nations are saved, receiving remission of sins, and continuing no longer in sin" (*Dial.* 111.4.6). Note that unlike Justin, Hebrews mentions neither the scarlet cord nor says that Rahab is in anyway a type of Christian redemption.

exhibit faith, how much more should faith be possible for the [presumably more respectable] listeners."⁴ Similarly, it has been suggested that the choice of Rahab would have particular relevance to any Gentile women amongst the readers. "If someone such as she could have faith, how much more they, who were respectable women?"⁵ However, each of these explanations is questionable. Hebrews simply does not highlight Rahab's gender, ethnicity, moral status or profession of faith. True, her commendation illustrates the universality of faith—if one is thinking in terms of a developed Christian theology with a strong Pauline element. But nothing in Hebrews indicates the author intended to illustrate this with Rahab. Lastly, several commentators mention the special interest Rahab had for early Christians (Matt. 1:5; James 2:25; 1 *Clement*) and the honor accorded her in rabbinic Judaism.⁶ The implication is that Rahab is present only because it was popular to mention her when discussing faith. This serves to dissolve any lingering sense that Rahab's presence on the list is unusual or significant, but it does not explain why she was selected or what role her commendation plays in the author's strategy.

The aforementioned feminist commentaries fare no better at giving Rahab her due. Cynthia Kittredge's commentary focuses almost exclusively on evaluating

⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 510. Inserted phrase mine. The warnings of 12:16 and 13:4 suggest that some in the audience were not entirely unlike Rahab.

⁵ Stanley Frost, "Who Were the Heroes? An exercise in Bi-testamentary Exegesis, with Christological Implications," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament* (ed. L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 169.

⁶ E.g., F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 318; Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews & James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 136; James Moffatt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 184; Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 166; C. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux* (2 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 2.361; Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 613. The most thorough survey of Jewish and Christian texts mentioning Rahab is F. Langlamet, "Rahab," in *Dictionnaire de la Bible Supplément* (ed. L. Pirot and A. Robert; Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1979), 10.1065-92. The rabbinic traditions are discussed by Phyllis Silverman Kramer, "Rahab: From Peshat to Pedagogy, or: The Many Faces of a Heroine," in *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (JSOTSup 309; ed. George Aichele; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 158-61.

Harnack's and Hoppin's arguments in favor of Priscilla being the author of Hebrews.⁷ When she gets to 11:31 she merely informs us that Rahab's presence is not evidence of female authorship but "indication that a fairly widespread tradition in early Christianity saw Rahab... as an exemplar of faith."⁸ As with traditional commentators, Kittredge explains Rahab's presence in terms of her popularity. Kittredge simply assumes that Rahab's commendation is mere window dressing; no inquiry is made into what role it might play in the author's rhetorical strategy.

Mary Rose D'Angelo's commentary more deliberately focuses on the women in Hebrews 11. Because D'Angelo is the author of a respected monograph on Hebrews, her discussion warrants special attention.⁹ She begins by asserting: "Women are included in Hebrews, but only marginally."¹⁰ In support she cites three examples where women are purportedly "erased" from the scriptural traditions Hebrews used: Moses' "fathers" are credited with his protection instead of his mother (11:23); Miriam is not mentioned in the account of Israel crossing the Red Sea (11:29); Deborah is not listed among the judges even though the notorious Jephthah is (11:31). On this basis D'Angelo suggests that "Hebrews seems not merely to neglect to provide women examples but almost to avoid them."¹¹ She acknowledges that Sarah

⁷ Adolph Harnack, "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes," ZNW 1 (1900): 16-41; Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla's Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Fort Bragg, Calif.: Lost Coast Press, 2nd edn, 2000). The arguments in favor of Priscilla's authorship are unconvincing and the author will continue to be referred to with the male pronoun.

⁸ Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, "Hebrews," in *Searching the Scriptures*, 446.

⁹ Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 42; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978).

¹⁰ Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Hebrews," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, 365.

¹¹ D'Angelo, "Hebrews," 366.

and Rahab are named but dismisses them because they "appear to represent Gentiles rather than women."¹² Each of these claims will be examined in turn.

In concert with most translations, the NRSV renders Hebrews 11:23a as "By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth." The Hebrew text of Exodus 2:2 attributes this to his mother alone. So why doesn't Hebrews say "by faith Moses was hidden by his mother"? D'Angelo insinuates that Hebrews wanted to avoid mentioning her. Hebrews, however, was not dependent on the Hebrew text but the Greek text. It attributes the action to both parents when it employs the plural verb ἐσκέπασαν ("they hid"). Its compound subject can only be the Levite and his wife from Exodus 2:1. D'Angelo notes the LXX's plural verb but simply ignores it. Moreover, she fails to note that both parents are credited in the roughly contemporary retellings of this story by Philo and Josephus.¹³ Josephus even goes so far as to give the primary role to the father Amram (*Antiq.* 2.217-21; cf. Philo, *Life of Moses*, 1.9), who is elevated as a visionary in a Qumran text preserved in six fragmentary copies (4QVisions of Amram^{a-f}). In contrast, the tradition Hebrews knew was egalitarian in simply attributing Moses' deliverance to both parents, exalting neither. Hebrews merely repeats that tradition.

D'Angelo cites a second reason for believing that Moses' mother is being slighted here. She claims that the NRSV is "deceptive" for rendering ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ as "by his parents" rather than "by his fathers."¹⁴ In her earlier work D'Angelo translated the text exactly the same without indicating it might be

¹² D'Angelo, "Hebrews," 366.

¹³ D'Angelo is not unfamiliar with this material, see *Moses*, 37-41.

¹⁴ D'Angelo, "Hebrews," 366.

problematic.¹⁵ Unfortunately, she does not inform us why she now feels "parents" is deceptive. In the plural πατήρ usually refers to an individual's ancestors or forefathers, but a reference to Moses' collective forefathers would be nonsensical. Also implausible would be a reference to Moses' "spiritual fathers" or *per impossible* his physical fathers (the adoption of children by homosexual partners was unknown in the ancient world). Lexicons note that the plural of πατήρ can refer to an individual's parents or legal guardians.¹⁶ This is the only way it can be understood here. On what basis, then, might the NRSV's translation be labeled deceptive? As far as I can determine, D'Angelo's complaint seems to be that it hides the fact that Hebrews employs an extended meaning of "fathers" to refer to both parents when a more common word for parents was available. By saying that Moses was hidden ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ, the author was placing unequal emphasis on Moses' father. But this too is no evidence of the erasure of Moses' mother. The common word for parents is the plural of γονεὺς. If one insistently presses the etymology, this gives us the equally androcentric "literal meaning" of "begetters."¹⁷ The likely reason Hebrews employed the plural of πατήρ instead of γονεὺς is that it highlights the parents' role as guardians. This is appropriate given the fact that Moses' parents were protecting their child from murder. Contrary to D'Angelo, the NRSV's translation does not mask the subtle erasing of a woman from the tradition. It may not convey the subtle nuance of the Greek, but it gives the best English translation possible.

¹⁵ D'Angelo, *Moses*, 17, 27, 37.

¹⁶ BAGD 635a; LSJ 1348a.

¹⁷ Whichever word he would have chosen, the author had to employ a grammatically masculine noun since this is how one refers to a group of mixed gender in Greek.

The other allegations of Hebrews erasing women are likewise without foundation. It is true that Miriam and Deborah are not mentioned, but there is no expectation that either of them should be. When 11:29 recounts the crossing of the Red Sea no one is specifically named, though it is part of the Moses pericope. Not mentioning Miriam in connection with this event is not expected since the biblical narrative mentions Miriam only briefly when she sings after the event (Exodus 15:21). If anyone has been "erased" from Hebrews' summation of the story, it is Pharaoh, the only character other than Moses prominent in the biblical narrative.

On first glance Deborah's absence appears conspicuous since Barak is mentioned (11:32). Deborah is a prophetess and judge in the narrative of Judges. She summons Barak and sends him to war (Judges 4:6). Barak insists upon her presence if he is to do this (Judges 4:8). Deborah also predicts that it will not be Barak who secures the defeat of Sisera, but a woman (Judges 4:9). Deborah is clearly presented as a strong and independent woman of authority and would have served admirably as an exemplar. *Prima facie* it would seem that this is an example of a woman being omitted from the list because of androcentric bias. After all, what could possibly justify Barak's inclusion and Deborah's exclusion from the list? But this conclusion would be too hasty. If we are going to find the absence of Deborah conspicuous, then we must also observe that several prominent men who would serve well in the role of hero are likewise unmentioned. Why, for example, aren't Aaron, Phinehas, Joshua or the Maccabees listed? They were, after all, popular Jewish heroes. Rather than rush to unwarranted conclusions about Hebrews' androcentrism, we do well to pay attention to the author's principle of selection. Aaron's absence is perhaps readily explained by the fact that much of Hebrews is an argument for the superiority of

Christ's priesthood over that of Aaron's descendents. But the absence of other prominent men whom one might expect on a list of heroes is not so easily explained. So the question becomes: what do Deborah and other prominent heroes of Jewish history have in common that may have led to their mutual omission from the list? Pamela Eisenbaum has reasonably argued that the common factor is that each is a potent symbol of Jewish nationalism. Hebrews 11 avoids highlighting figures from Israel's history who are usually construed as heroes of national deliverance.¹⁸ Thus, Deborah is absent for the same reason that Phinehas and Joshua are, not because of androcentric bias.

Another problem facing D'Angelo's claim that Hebrews "seems not merely to neglect to provide women examples but almost to avoid them" is that Hebrews does provide examples of women. The anaphoric half of the chapter mentions both Sarah and Rahab by name (11:11, 31) and there is clear allusion to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24) and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:18-37) in the second half (11:35). D'Angelo does not discuss the latter two, probably because their inclusion is only implicit. She discounts any significance to the inclusion of Sarah and Rahab because she believes they merely represent Gentiles. But we must ask: if the author wanted to avoid citing women as examples, then why are Sarah and Rahab mentioned at all when male examples of Gentiles are available (e.g., Eliezer of Damascus, Uriah and others of David's "mighty men," Naaman)? Furthermore, even if the author was not trying to avoid women, Sarah and Rahab are odd choices to illustrate Gentile inclusion in faith.

¹⁸Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (SBLDS 156; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

Sarah is the wife of the Hebrew patriarch and by no means a representative Gentile. Rahab is clearly a Gentile, but she is also known as ἡ πόρνη, "the prostitute." In the subsequent context readers are warned not to be πόρνος ἢ βέβηλος (sexually immoral or profane) like Esau (12:26). They are also told to keep the marriage bed undefiled because God will judge adulterers and πόρνους (13:4). In these verses πόρνος is a generic term for sexually immoral persons. But as the etymology suggests, the word was also commonly used to refer to any man known for visiting a πόρνη—*whoremonger* in older English. Given these subsequent warnings, Rahab is the last person the author should select as an example of Gentile inclusion. This is especially so since neither the Old Testament nor Hebrews states that she repented or changed occupation. If illustrating Gentile inclusion was the author's point, then an exponentially better exemplar was available in the noble Moabite Ruth.

An additional difficulty faces D'Angelo's dismissal of Sarah and Rahab (as well as the related traditional explanation for Rahab's commendation). To see any of the heroes of Hebrews 11 heroes as examples of Gentile inclusion is to read it as if it were a Pauline letter. It assumes that Hebrews is interested in addressing the kinds of concerns that characterized Pauline communities in the Diaspora. Yet nowhere does Hebrews distinguish between Jews and Gentiles. Nowhere does it even so much as allude to circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath keeping or any of the other issues that attended the vigorous debates about the status of Gentiles in the Christian movement of the Diaspora.¹⁹ Nor does it betray any awareness of the practical

¹⁹ 13:9 is sometimes thought to refer to dietary laws. However, both context and external parallels with other Second Temple Jewish texts indicate that it is more likely referring to holy foods (i.e., shared sacrifices) and halakhic regulations concerning them. These are issues that do not feature in debates about Gentile inclusion in the Christian movement.

difficulties that arose in mixed communities composed of Torah-observant Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles who were not. Hebrews reads as if it were written to a community for whom neither the status of Gentiles nor the pragmatic difficulties of their living in community with Torah-observant Jews are issues of any practical concern. Since nothing in Hebrews 11 capitalizes on the ethnic background of Sarah or Rahab, there is no reason to think that either of them was mentioned to represent Gentiles.

We are brought back to our initial questions: Why is Rahab mentioned on the list of heroes? What role does her commendation play in the author's overall strategy? As we have seen, both traditional and feminist explanations of her presence are inadequate. Scholars have often identified Rahab as the most surprising and interesting person to find on the list.²⁰ Yet, they also seem to assume that Rahab's commendation can only be an insignificant appendage to a list that is really about men's examples.²¹ Thus, their usual explanations serve to mitigate their initial surprise. Feminist critics have both fostered this assumption and contributed to the further marginalization of Rahab (as well as the other women of Hebrews). The peculiarity of Rahab's presence on the list needs to be appreciated and explained. To

²⁰ E.g., Bruce, *Hebrews*, 318; Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 82; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 502; Donald Hagner, *Hebrews* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 204; William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols.; WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991), 379; August Strobel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (4th edn.; NTD 9/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 152.

²¹ Some scholars even proceed as if there are no women on the list at all. Samuel Sandmel, for example, lists in order all the male exemplars in the first half of Hebrews 11 but omits Sarah and Rahab. See *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (aug. ed.; New York: Ktav, 1974), 233-34.

accomplish this I will analyze Hebrews 11 from a gynocentric (but not necessarily feminist) perspective.²²

Gynocentric Observations about the Hero List

We have already seen that several women are present on the list of exemplars.

Sarah is the first woman mentioned and she *may* be the subject of her own commendation (11:11).²³ But even if she is, Sarah is named only in connection with her husband and the male heir she bears him. Moses' mother is implicitly referred to in 11:23, but she is present in her role as mother of a prominent son. Similarly, the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite woman are alluded to as "women [who] received their dead" (11:35). The dead are their sons who were brought back to life by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. None of these four women is mentioned in her own right but only in connection with a husband, son or male authority figure. If our analysis consisted only of these superficial observations, then we would have to conclude that Hebrews 11 mentions women only marginally. However, this apparent androcentrism is more than counterbalanced by Rahab's commendation.

²² This terminology is taken from Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 1-16. It should be noted that I am not employing a gynocentric hermeneutic because of ideological feminism or external feminist concerns. It is being used in an ad hoc fashion in order to read the text from a perspective that will help us better understand the author's rhetorical strategy and what he intended to communicate to his first-century readers. For this reason I do not describe it as feminist.

²³ Commentators and translators find it difficult to accept that Sarah is the subject of καταβολὴν σπέρματος ἔλαβεν, "received seminal emission" (11:11). P.W. van der Horst has surveyed ancient theories of conception and demonstrates that the author of Hebrews could easily have had knowledge of the double-seed theory, the idea that both the man and woman contribute semen. Thus, there is nothing implausible about Sarah being the subject of the commendation. See "Sarah's Seminal Emission: Hebrews 11:11 in the Light of Ancient Embryology," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. D.L. Balch, E. Ferguson and W.A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 287-302. But one should remember that 11:11 is part of the larger section on Abraham (vv. 8-19) which includes the recollection of the promise to Abraham: Ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα (11:18).

Sirach 44:1 aptly describes the purpose of similar lists from antiquity: "Let us sing the praises of famous men (ἄνδρας ἐνδόξους)." Women generally do not appear on ancient Jewish hero lists, even marginally.²⁴ The fact that several are mentioned in Hebrews 11 is unusual. Even more remarkable is the fact that these women are not merely commended, they are counted among "the elders" (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) of 11:2. Gender inclusive translations like "our ancestors" (NRSV), "the people of old" (ESV) and "the ancients" (TNIV) all give the impression that this is a vague reference to people from the past generally. The point of Hebrews 11 is not to illustrate a gnomic religious truth about faith by reference to past figures. This is a common understanding of the chapter but another example of the tendency to read Hebrews as if it were a Pauline letter. When the author of Hebrews speaks of "the elders," in typical Jewish fashion he refers to the collective elders of Israel's past.²⁵ He presents their examples of acting in faith as authoritative precedent to be imitated (cf. 6:12). These elders are either identical to or a subset of the "the fathers" to whom God spoke by the prophets (1:1). For Hebrews, women are among the authoritative and foundational elders of Israel, including the Jesus movement.

In addition to being designated "the elders," in 12:1 the exemplars are also collectively designated "witnesses" (μαρτύρων) who in some sense surround the faithful. They are examples to be imitated, but by their examples they also testify to the recipients of Hebrews. This is evident when he says that Abel "still speaks" even though he died (11:4). By placing women on the list and thereby including them

²⁴ Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 140. Also see Eisenbaum's comparative chart (pp. 230-31) and the more extensive chart in Christian Rose, *Die Wolke der Zeugen: Eine exegetisch-traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 10,32-12,3* (WUNT² 60; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Siebeck], 1994), 85.

²⁵ Cf. Matt 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.4.

among the distinguished witnesses, the author deliberately gives them a voice.

Designating the exemplars μαρτύρων also plays off of the "being testified about" (i.e., commended) mentioned in 11:2 and 11:39.²⁶ This recalls God being depicted earlier as adding his testimony concerning the word of salvation and/or Jesus by means of miracles (2:4).²⁷ Thus, the heroes of Hebrews 11 both have a voice and have a divine voice testifying about them. Rather than focus on the ways in which the heroes exemplify an abstract faith, interpreters would do better to discern what the author believed these voices were saying to his audience. The voices of the women, especially Rahab's, should not be ignored.

When we get to 11:31 we immediately see that Rahab's entry is significantly different from those of the other women in Hebrews 11. There is nothing ambiguous about it; Rahab is the explicit and sole subject of commendation. Her commendation is not dependent upon her relationship with a husband, father, or male heir. The only men mentioned in connection with Rahab are the unnamed spies she gave refuge too. But by recalling that she had given them refuge, Hebrews highlights for his readers that Rahab was the one in the position of power. Rahab is commended as an independent woman.

²⁶ The aorist participles need not imply past action, but could be gnomic or timeless. Cf. Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 36-37, 187-90.

²⁷ Commentators often identify this testimony with apostolic miracles, assuming that "those who heard" refer to apostles of a previous generation. There is no good reason for limiting the circle of hearers to the apostles. Likewise, though the recipients heard the Christian message from people who had accepted it before them, there is no good reason for supposing that they were part of the second or third generation of the movement. By using a present tense genitive absolute rather than subordinating the participle, the author seems to indicate that God's testimony continues independent of those hearers' confirming actions. As Westcott rightly noted, "The divine witness to the 'salvation' of the Gospel is both continuous and manifold." B.F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1889; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 39. Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 69; pace Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 140.

War is not an activity in which women usually participate, but in the book of Joshua Rahab's actions are crucial in God leading Israel to its first victory in Canaan. In Joshua 2 she has the power of life and death over the spies to use as she pleases. These young men depend upon her mercy and willingness to protect them, a clear reversal of stereotypical gender roles. Throughout the story the spies are passive in comparison with Rahab who actively hides them and directs their escape (see 2:4, 6, 15, 16).²⁸ When the king's messengers arrive to question her, she defies the king's authority and refuses to furnish the messengers with the information they seek.²⁹ She instead hides the spies because she is convinced that YHWH has given the land to Israel. In this she proves herself wiser and more clever than the king of Jericho.³⁰ In Joshua 6 the spies are ordered back into the city to find Rahab and lead her out before it is destroyed. They owe Rahab their lives and have an obligation to fulfill their promise to her. Joshua himself, however, orders them to enter the city and bring her out (6:22). This may suggest a debt of honor owed to Rahab by the entire people of Israel. The difference between Rahab and the other women of Hebrews 11 is made all the more stark when one considers that she is not only an independent woman, but a prostitute and a Canaanite.³¹ Abruptly culminating the list with Rahab has been rightly described as a bold move by the author.³²

²⁸ Elie Assis, "The Choice to Serve God and Assist His People: Rahab and Yael," *Biblica* 85/1 (2004): 84.

²⁹ Like Moses (11:27), Rahab does not fear the king's wrath.

³⁰ Phyllis A. Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 131.

³¹ Canaanites were not mere Gentiles. The Canaanites were one of the peoples Israel was commanded to drive out and annihilate. They were considered to be among the most wicked and idolatrous of Gentiles and the land was said to be polluted because of them (see Ex 23:23, 28; 33:2; 34:11; Deut 7:1-4; 20:16-17; Josh 3:10; cf. Gen 15:21; Ezra 9:1).

³² Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 143.

The Gynocentric Structure of the Hero List

The rhetorical patterns of Hebrews 11 suggest that the list was designed to culminate with Rahab. Hebrews 11 consists of a carefully constructed and selective list of exemplars from Israel's history followed by a rush of historical names and events that the author professes not to have time to discuss. Each entry on the list begins with the anaphoric (repetitive) use of *πίσται*, usually translated "by faith." The basic pattern for each entry is: "By faith S did X" or "By faith S was Xed." Some of the entries recount more than one event or deed associated with the named figure, also employing the anaphoric use of "by faith." (The most notable of these are the entries on Abraham and Moses.) Each exemplar is entered on the list according to the chronological order of the Old Testament. At one point the list is interrupted with commentary (13-16), but the pattern resumes and the reader can anticipate the names of those who will be named. In verses 4-29 Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham (and Sarah), Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses and various deeds associated with them are mentioned in order.

In 11:29 it is recalled that by faith "the people" passed through the Red Sea. Though the people are the subject of the sentence, Moses remains the hero in view. But in 11:30 the author moves away from events associated with Moses. At that point one expects an entry beginning with "By faith Joshua" since he is the major hero that follows Moses in the biblical narrative. The author, however, breaks the pattern and neither names nor otherwise refers to any person. Without parallel in the rest of the list, inanimate objects, the walls of Jericho, are the subject of the entry. The author recalls that they were encircled for seven days but avoids mentioning who encircled them. In the biblical story this is the major event associated with Joshua more than

any other. In light of the list's consistent pattern up to this point, it is clear that the author has gone out of his way to avoid mentioning Joshua. This unexpected change creates a rhetorical pause pregnant with the expectation to hear Joshua's name, but it remains withheld. Instead the next entry begins "By faith Rahab." The great captain of the conquest is deliberately passed over. A Canaanite prostitute stands in his place. This suggests that the anaphoric list was carefully designed to culminate with Rahab.

Immediately following Rahab's entry the anaphoric pattern ceases. Reminiscent of a headlong rush down a mountain, the second half of the chapter rapidly names and alludes to figures and events in Israel's history. The transition occurs when the author states, "And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell..." (11:32). The question is rhetorical; having reached Rahab, the author has now said the main thing he wanted to say. He suggests that he could go on telling about what sorts of things people of faith do, but he does not need to highlight them individually because he has just highlighted his most important example. By transitioning in this way, Rahab's commendation is placed in the center and at the climax of the chapter. Hebrews 11 is literally gynocentric.

Rahab and the Function of Hebrews 11

Surprisingly, boldly and quite deliberately Hebrews culminates the list of heroes with Rahab. Her inclusion cries for explanation. Yet, scholars have been blind to this. There are several reasons for this blindness. Androcentric assumptions and over-familiarity with the chapter have already been mentioned. Some feminist

scholars are ambivalent about the Rahab story in Joshua.³³ This may disincline some from investigating her role in Hebrews. But perhaps the most determinative factor is the widespread failure to appreciate the function of Hebrews 11. Rather than see it as an integral part of the book's overall argument, the chapter is often treated as an inspirational aside. Interpreters infer from the "definition" of faith at the chapter's head (11:1) and the anaphoric use of *πίστει* that each hero is listed because he or she exemplifies faith. Commentators who treat Hebrews 11 in this way usually focus their comments on how each hero displayed faith in the Old Testament. In the case of Rahab, this leads scholars to illustrate Rahab's exemplification of faith by reference to Joshua 2. Very few have noticed that Joshua 2 is simply not the passage upon which Hebrews bases Rahab's commendation.

Each of the heroes is cited because he or she is someone who displays faith, but not in the abstract way the common reading presupposes. The faith for which the heroes are listed is not confessional affirmation. Nor is it generic faithfulness to God. Rather, it is action undertaken on the basis of unseen realities. Confessional faith motivates the actions of the heroes, giving them reason to do the things they do. Faithfulness to God is displayed in carrying them through. The "faith" of Hebrews' heroes is almost coextensive with their deeds. Lindars correctly suggests that the meaning of the repeated *πίστει* is best appreciated when it is translated as "acting in faith."³⁴

³³ E.g., Judith E. McKinlay, "Rahab: A Hero/ine?" *BibInt* 7/1 (1999): 44-57.

³⁴ Barnabas Lindars, "The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews," *NTS* 35 (1989): 401 n.1.

Philip Esler has recently argued that Hebrews 11 is an attempt by the author to enhance the group identity of his audience.³⁵ The list of heroes functions to formulate and transmit a collective memory that helps the audience understand who they are in the present. The author retrospectively enlists figures from Israelite history as eminent predecessors who are prototypical of the group's identity. In the language of social-identity theory, the heroes are depicted as "possible selves" prototypical of the Christ-following ingroup. Esler demonstrates this with respect to Abel, Enoch and Noah and his analysis could easily be extended to the rest of the heroes on the anaphoric list. Esler's insights, however, can be pressed further. The purpose of the hero list is to do more than help the recipients understand themselves in the present and give them models of ingroup values. It is important to also appreciate its intentional focus on the *actions* that people with the ingroup identity engage in. The author deliberately commends the heroes for actions he wants his readers to imitate, sometimes in very concrete ways.

Earlier in the book the author intimates this purpose of chapter 11 when he expresses his desire for the readers to become "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6:12). The heroes are not put forward for imitation because they display the generic virtue of faithfulness, but for specific deeds intended to serve as precedent for the community's own actions. Harold Attridge perceives that several of the exemplars "are portrayed with particular attention to the situation of the addressees."³⁶ Schenk correctly extends this to the

³⁵ Philip F. Esler, "Collective Memory and Hebrews 11: Outlining a New Investigative Framework," in *Memory, Text and Tradition: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (ed. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher; Semeia; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming 2006).

³⁶ Harold W. Attridge, "Paraenesis in a Homily (λόγος παρακλήσεως): The Possible Location of, and Socialization In, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 (1990): 219.

principle of selection when he states: "the author has chosen each individual in the light of the audience's situation."³⁷ Likewise, David deSilva observes that "the author has selected and shaped his examples to address the specific situation of his hearers and to support his exhortation to them."³⁸ Thus, we should seek to interpret the commendations in light of the fact that the focus of Hebrews 11 "is not upon the heroes and heroines of the past but is fixed very sharply on the present and even upon the future."³⁹ This focus on the present situation of the readers and their future action has the clear implication that Hebrews 11 "is meant to influence decision and action: if the present community is to receive the approval of God, they too must act according to *pistis*, even to the point of undergoing suffering and death.... The rhetor is looking not for assent, but for action."⁴⁰

The faith that the heroes display is ultimately grounded in their perceiving from afar God's decisive intervention into history on behalf of his people. This can be seen by reading the definition of faith (11:1) in light of its anticipation earlier in the book (2:6-9) and its echo later (12:26-27).⁴¹ In 11:3 the author reminds his readers that creation was not made from visible things, grounding the idea that fundamental realities are not necessarily those that happen to be visible in the present. This is

³⁷ Kenneth Schenk, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 67.

³⁸ David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 380.

³⁹ Alan D. Bulley, "Death and rhetoric in the Hebrews 'hymn to faith,'" *SR* 25/4 (1996): 419.

⁴⁰ Bulley, "Death and rhetoric," 420.

⁴¹ Gender inclusive translations of 2:6-9 as found in the NRSV and TNIV greatly obscure the author's argument. The author is applying the psalm to Jesus in this argument, but these translations give the impression that the point is about humanity in general. As Harold Attridge correctly observes: "For Hebrews the psalm is not, primarily at least, a meditation on the lofty status of humankind in the created order, but an oracle that describes the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus" (*Hebrews* [Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 72). Attridge feels that an association with the eschatological title "Son of Man" is problematic because the author does not develop the images most closely associated with it, such as the Son of Man "coming on the clouds of heaven" as in Mark 14:62 and Matt 26:64. However, this overlooks the author's use of Hab 2:3 in 10:37: "For yet 'in a little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay.'"

mentioned in support of the definition of faith in 11:1 as "the conviction of things unseen" (πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων). In his final argument for the superiority of the Son over the angels (2:6-8) the author of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 8. This argument employs language similar to 11:1, foreshadowing the definition of faith. As with all human beings, the Son was made lower than the angels for a little while (2:7). He has been crowned with glory and honor, but "but now we do not yet see" (νῦν δὲ οὐπω ὁρῶμεν) all things subjected to him as the psalm indicates (2:8). But, he says, "we do see" (βλέπομεν) that Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor (2:9). The readers, therefore, are to live in light of the conviction that what is unseen is certain, namely the imminent subjection of all things to Jesus. Robert Brawley has teased this out in more detail, showing that Hebrews 2:8 serves as "a preliminary qualification reducing the ambiguity of faith in 11:1." Specifically, faith in 11:1 "has to do with the reality of the ultimate subjection of all things to Christ, which is hoped for and not yet seen."⁴² Or, as he states later, "The correlation between Heb 2:8 and 11:1 indicates that the conviction that comes by faith is the certainty of a divine apocalyptic victory."⁴³ The actions of the heroes, then, should be understood as being motivated by hopes that are ultimately eschatological in nature. Thus, the list functions to encourage the readers to act in faith in light of the eschatological expectations of their community. This will be seen more clearly later.

If we are to properly explain Rahab's presence on the hero list, then we must keep the purpose of the list in mind. With the rest of the exemplars, Rahab has been

⁴² Robert L. Brawley, "Discursive Structure and the Unseen in Hebrews 2:8 and 11:1: A Neglected Aspect of the Context," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 85.

⁴³ "Discursive Structure," 95.

included because some aspect of her acting in faith provides precedent to be imitated by the readers. The inclusion of a woman on a Jewish hero list is so unusual as to suggest that she was chosen because her example is particularly pertinent to the readers' situation. This is made even clearer when we recall that Rahab was also a Canaanite prostitute. Just how pertinent the author feels Rahab's precedent is to his readers' situation is demonstrated in how he carefully constructs the list to culminate and center upon her example. Rahab is no minor appendage here; she is the most important person on the list.

Rahab's Precedent Setting Example

Rahab's commendation is brief: Πίστει Ραάβ ἡ πόρνη οὐ συναπώλετο τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν, δεξαμένη τοὺς κατασκόπους μετ' εἰρήνης. Unlike the entries on Abraham and Moses, the author offers no elaboration or commentary. He simply surprises his readers with Rahab and abruptly ends the anaphoric list. Given the brevity of the entry, one might think that it simply cannot have the significance for the chapter that the foregoing analysis suggests. But as will be demonstrated shortly, the author does not need to elaborate on the significance of Rahab's example here. He expects his readers to be familiar with the Old Testament passage to which he refers and therefore able discern its significance for themselves. He also plans to return to the point and make it more explicit when he later gives his final and climactic exhortation (13:13-14). Rahab's commendation is an anticipatory parallel to that final exhortation and must be understood in light of it. To see this we must look at the Old Testament text which Hebrews 11:31 summarizes.

It is almost universally assumed that Rahab's commendation is based on Joshua 2:9ff. This assumption is so deeply ingrained that even those carefully studying the heroes of Hebrews 11 can fail to properly identify the Old Testament passage to which Hebrews directly refers. Pamela Eisenbaum, for example, is one of the few scholars to consider what principle of selection might have led the author to include Rahab while excluding more prominent figures from Israel's past (e.g., Aaron, Joshua, Phinehas), including more prominent women of higher moral standing (e.g., Deborah, Ruth and Esther).⁴⁴ She rightly observes that "the author goes out of his way to make the list culminate with Rahab."⁴⁵ Unfortunately, she reaches this conclusion for the wrong reason. The reason she cites is that the author breaks chronological order when he places the fall of Jericho's walls prior to Rahab's commendation. This would be true if the focus of her commendation is either the story of hiding the spies or her "confessing faith" as recounted in Joshua 2. Hebrews 11:31 mentions that Rahab harbored the spies and Eisenbaum reads the verse as if this were the focus of the author's commendation.⁴⁶ However, neither this nor Rahab's confession is the basis for commendation.⁴⁷ The "acting in faith" that is highlighted is the fact that Rahab was not destroyed with those who were disobedient (οὐ συναπώλετο τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν). This is recounted in Joshua 6 *after* the walls have been breached. The aorist participle phrase in the second half of the

⁴⁴ Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 140.

⁴⁵ Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 173.

⁴⁶ Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 169 n. 138.

⁴⁷ Nearly all commentators refer to Joshua 2 as the basis for Rahab's commendation. Nonetheless, it is surprising to see this mistake made in a monograph specifically focused on the heroes of Hebrews 11. But Eisenbaum's is not the only one. Both Graber's study of the list's Old Testament background and Rose's detailed investigation of its tradition history likewise explain Rahab's commendation primarily in terms of Joshua 2:9, missing entirely the significance of Joshua 6:23-24. See Friedrich Graber, *Der Glaubensweg des Volkes Gottes: Eine Erklärung von Hebräer 11 als Beitrag zum Verständnis des Alten Testaments* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1943), 120-25 and Rose, *Die Wolke der Zeugen*, 299-303.

verse refers to the *antecedent* ground for Rahab's deliverance (δεξαμένη τοὺς κατασκόπους μετ' εἰρήνης). Because Rahab had earlier welcomed the spies, by faith she was delivered when everyone else in her city was destroyed. As we will see shortly, events in Joshua 2 are not irrelevant to the citation, but they are not the place to begin if we want to understand why Rahab was selected as the list's pinnacle exemplar.

Several times in her study Eisenbaum observes that Rahab's presence on the list is very unusual and requires explanation. She rightly senses that the list was designed to culminate with Rahab. But when it comes time to explain Rahab's role in the list, all Eisenbaum offers is that she is an outsider. According to Eisenbaum, Rahab is mentioned because she fits in a trajectory the author has followed throughout the chapter to portray biblical heroes as outsiders who stand apart from their generation, nation and the world.⁴⁸ But this does not explain why Rahab specifically was chosen as the culminating figure on the list when many other Old Testament figures could have served the same role. The likely response is that the author deliberately stopped with Rahab because he wanted to avoid mentioning the further conquest of the Canaan. Perhaps. But had Eisenbaum correctly identified the Old Testament passage to which Hebrews 11:31 refers, she might have discovered a more adequate explanation.⁴⁹

Hebrews 11:31 highlights the fact that Rahab was not destroyed with the other inhabitants of Jericho. This is a summary of Joshua 6:23-24a (LXX). There her

⁴⁸ Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 173.

⁴⁹ Eisenbaum's analysis also falters because she classifies Hebrews as epideictic rather than deliberative rhetoric (*Jewish Heroes*, 12, 135 n. 4). As will be demonstrated shortly, Rahab's example is part of the author's strategy to influence a specific course of action.

deliverance is accomplished by a two part action: she was "led out" (ἐξηγάγosan) of the city by the spies who "set her outside the camp of Israel" (κατέστησαν αὐτήν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς Ἰσραηλ). Her deliverance is immediately contrasted with the destruction of the city and its inhabitants: "And the city was burned with fire along with all who were in it" (καὶ ἡ πόλις ἐνεπρήσθη ἐμπυρισμῷ σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν αὐτῇ). The wording of Joshua 6:23-24a parallels passages in Hebrews in a way that does not appear to be coincidental. The antecedent ground for Rahab's deliverance in the second half of her commendation appears to restate Joshua 6:25. These features suggest the author expected his readers to be familiar with the wording of this passage when he referred to it.

Jericho was susceptible to destruction because it was a city designed and built by human beings. This contrasts sharply with the city for which Abraham awaited: "the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10). Jericho typifies the sorts of things that can be "shaken" and removed (12:27). It is an antitype of the heavenly Jerusalem and kingdom that cannot be shaken (12:22, 28). The people of Jericho typify those who do not act in faith. Hebrews describes them as "those who were disobedient" (τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν), placing them in the same category as the wilderness generation, also referred to as "those who were disobedient" (τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν) (3:18). Because of unbelief (ἀπιστία) the wilderness generation was unable to enter God's rest (3:18-19). Likewise, the author implicitly says that inhabitants of Jericho lacked faith and were destroyed because of it. In both cases the people had heard a message of "good news" but were disobedient and not united in faith with those who listened (4:2, 6). The author is encouraging his audience to be unlike "those who were disobedient." As people who act in faith they are to imitate

those few of the exodus generation "who listened" (4:2). Utilizing the language and imagery of Psalm 95, the readers are exhorted: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (3:7, 12, 15; 4:6-7).

Rahab is the climactic example of the hero list because her situation closely parallels both that of the wilderness generation described in Psalm 95 and that of the audience. Rahab is to be imitated because she was the only person in her city who responded in faith to the message she heard.⁵⁰ Like Rahab, the readers are confronted with a divine message that demands response, that demands action. They can disregard the message and face destruction, or they can be like Rahab and live. As the author begins the hero list he reminds his readers that their community is "not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved" (10:39). This is a way of reminding them of how they should act in their situation as people who share the faith of "the fathers" (which includes women). Rahab is the ideal exemplar because she did not shrink back as her people did.⁵¹ She was saved. The audience is presented with her specific example because they are in a very similar situation. They too are being presented with a divine message that requires response: "See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who reveals/warns from heaven!" (12:25). As with Rahab, the divine message the readers are confronted with is a revelation of imminent judgement. This is somewhat masked by the usual English translation "the

⁵⁰ Cf. Joshua 2:10-11: "for we have heard.... As soon as we heard it...."

⁵¹ Cf. Joshua 2:11: "As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted."

one who warns" and even more so by Craig Koester's rendering "the one who admonishes."⁵²

According to Koester, Hebrews is referring here to God speaking "from heaven through the prophets and the psalms... which are made effective through the Spirit that comes from heaven."⁵³ By "prophets" Koester apparently means the writings of the Old Testament prophets. This looks like an anachronistic importation of cessationist Christian theology, the modern view that God speaks only through the written text of Scripture as the Spirit illuminates it to the believer. The author likely has scriptural texts in mind when he speaks of the word/oracles of God in 5:12. In 13:7 he is likely thinking of the Spirit-guided interpretation and proclamation of scripture by the community's leaders in 13:7.⁵⁴ In 12:25, however, something less comfortable to elitist Western sensibilities is in view. As we observed in Chapter Six, the injunction to listen to τὸν χρηματίζοντα refers to one who is declaring an oracle (χρησμός).⁵⁵ The author of Hebrews has in view divine instruction being conveyed to the community through one or more prophets.

Moses is earlier described as being warned in an oracle to construct the tabernacle in accordance with the pattern he had been shown (8:5; cf. Exodus 25:40). The oracle of 12:25 likewise refers to divinely revealed instruction and warning but also carries with it eschatological overtones. The eschatological nature of the oracle is indicated by an entry on the hero list crafted as an anticipatory parallel to the

⁵² Koester, *Hebrews*, 547.

⁵³ Koester, *Hebrews*, 547.

⁵⁴ The discussion about whether "the word of God" described in 4:12 refers to the Logos, scripture or prophetic utterance is too complex to be addressed in the space available here.

⁵⁵ This is also observed by Jean Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. A.W. Heathcote and P.J. Allcock; London: Epworth, 1970), 118. Cf. Bird's observation that in Joshua 2 "Rahab's role is that of an oracle" when she declares what YHWH will do ("Harlot as Heroine," 131).

exhortation: "By faith Noah received an oracle about things not yet seen" (Πίστει χρηματισθεὶς Νῶε περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων) (11:7). This is no generic warning. Noah is depicted as having received an oracle about the impending judgement of the world.⁵⁶ He recognized, as it were, that it is a frightful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (cf. 10:31). Thus, with fearful reverence (εὐλαβηθεὶς) he heeded the oracle and built an ark. By so acting in faith he saved his household, condemned the world and became an heir of righteousness. Like Rahab, Noah heard the divine message about impending destruction awaiting his people, was convinced of what he heard and acted upon it in faith. The author sees his readers in a very similar situation and encourages them to imitate such actions. He effectively says: "Listen to the oracle being spoken to you, obey it and be saved from destruction. Be like Noah."

As with most of the exemplars, the author speaks to the situation of the community in his comments about Noah. Rahab's example, however, is more pertinent because she abandoned her city. The significance of her connection with a city doomed to destruction is best appreciated in light of two things. First, consider the author's interruption of the hero list in 11:13-16. The parallelism between the opening lines of this interruption and the close of the chapter (12:39) indicate that it applies to all of the heroes, not just to those mentioned up to that point. The heroes are described as strangers and foreigners on earth seeking a homeland (11:-13-14). They are depicted as all being like Abraham, people who left the land of their birth but who did not return to it because they were seeking the heavenly homeland

⁵⁶ See further Bernhard Heininger, "Hebr 11.7 und das Henochorakel am Ende der Welt," *NTS* 44 (1998): 115-32.

(11:15-16). Because their desire was for the heavenly country, "God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them" (11:16). With this statement the author equates the desire of all the heroes with Abraham's paradigmatic example: "For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10).

Second, the significance of Rahab's connection with a city becomes clear by considering the book's climactic exhortation in 13:13-14: "Therefore, let us go out to him outside the camp bearing his reproach, for here we do not have an enduring city but instead we eagerly seek the one that is coming." Here the author identifies with his readers and speaks with an inclusive "us/we." The "we" is the community of faith to which the author and readers both belong. He is exhorting his readers to action and identifies with them to favorably dispose them to obedience. The exhortation epitomizes much that the author has been encouraging throughout the book. Moreover, he has anticipated it already in chapter 11. Moses is depicted as rejecting the wealth of Egypt because he placed greater value on "the reproach of Christ" (τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ). This obvious anachronism is intended to speak to the reader's situation, encouraging them to imitate Moses.⁵⁷ In 13:13 the author becomes explicit when he encourages the recipients to go outside the camp "bearing his [Christ's] reproach" (τὸν ὀνειδισμόν αὐτοῦ φέροντες). Likewise, when 11:14 says the exemplars are "seeking a homeland" and desire a "heavenly country," he anticipates 13:14: "we eagerly seek the one [city] that is coming." Again, the readers

⁵⁷ This aspect of Moses' commendation appears to be based on Joshua 5:9 which speaks of the removal of "the reproach of Egypt" (τὸν ὀνειδισμόν Αἰγύπτου) from Israel at Gilgal. The "reproach of Egypt" refers to the disgrace Israel bore because the wilderness generation disobeyed the commandment (LXX) or voice (Heb.) of God (5:6). Because Moses was not guilty with the wilderness generation the author of Hebrews sees him as having instead bore the reproach of Christ.

are intended to imitate the heroes of chapter 11. They are to bear Christ's reproach in light of the coming city. The city is, of course, the eschatological city Abraham sought whose architect and builder is God (11:10); it is the city God has prepared for those who in faith greet the divine promises from afar (11:16).

Just as Noah's commendation anticipates the exhortation of 12:25, so the exhortation of 13:13-14 is anticipated by Moses' commendation and by comments in chapter 11 about the eschatological city. But the most striking anticipation of all is Rahab's commendation. On the surface this is not obvious, but it quickly becomes so if one examines the Old Testament text which the commendation summarizes. In three places the two passages parallel one another in ways that cannot be accidental. In Joshua 6:23 Rahab was "led out" of her city and placed "outside the camp of Israel;" the recipients of Hebrews are exhorted to "go out" to Jesus "outside the camp" (13:13). In Joshua 6:24 Rahab's city was destroyed, "burned with fire" (ἐνεπρήσθη ἐμπυρισμῷ); the readers are told that here they have no enduring city (13:14). (Only a few verses previous in 12:28 they were reminded that God is a "consuming fire.") These parallels can be more clearly seen in context.

And the two young men who had been spies went into the city to the house of the woman and [A] led out (ἐξηγάγουσιν) Rahab the prostitute and her father and her mother and her brothers and all who were hers and set her and all those with her [B] outside the camp of Israel (ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς Ἰσραηλ). [C] And the city was burned with fire (καὶ ἡ πόλις ἐνεπρήσθη ἐμπυρισμῷ σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν αὐτῇ) along with all who were in it. (Joshua 6:23-24a LXX)

Therefore, let us [A] go out (ἐξερχώμεθα) to him [B] outside the camp (ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) bearing his reproach, [C] for here we do not have an enduring city (οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ὧδε μένουσαν πόλιν) but instead we eagerly seek the one that is coming. (Heb 13:13-14)

The parallelism between these passages suggests that 13:13-14 was fashioned in conformity to Joshua 6:23-24a. Particularly striking is the use of "outside the camp" in both passages. In the Pentateuch "the camp" is a technical designation for the wilderness camp of Israel. Occasionally the phrase "outside the camp" occurs in the narrative, but most frequently it is found in the formulation of purification and sacrificial regulations.⁵⁸ The only other occurrences of this phrase in the biblical documents are Joshua 6:23 and Hebrews 13:11, 13.⁵⁹ Because of the limited number of texts and specialized contexts in which the phrase otherwise occurs, its occurrence in Joshua 6:23 would have been conspicuous to ancient interpreters. Hebrews 13:11-12 draws from the sacrificial regulations when explaining that Jesus suffered outside the city gate, but the call to go out to Jesus "outside the camp" is modeled on Rahab's example. This is made clear by the ground for leaving the camp, the fact that "here we do not have an enduring city." The implied contrast equates the camp with the readers' city. They are in a situation akin to Rahab's. They live in a city that the author believes is doomed to destruction. Like Rahab, they are to go outside the camp to avoid destruction. In doing so they will be like the exemplars of faith who sought the heavenly land and the coming city. Support for the identification of the "camp" with a city is also found in the parallelism of Hebrews 13:11-14. The high priest burns the bodies of the sacrificial animals outside the camp (ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) (v.11); Jesus suffers outside the gate (ἐξω τῆς πύλης) (v.12); the readers are exhorted to go to Jesus outside the camp (ἐξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) (v.13).

⁵⁸ In Rahlfs' edition of the LXX the phrase is found in the following passages: Exod: 29:14; 33:7; 33:8; Lev: 4:12; 4:21; 6:4; 8:17; 9:11; 10:4; 10:5; 13:46; 14:3; 16:27; 17:3; 24:14; 24:23; Num: 5:3; 5:4; 12:14; 12:15; 15:36; 19:3; 19:9; 31:13; 31:19; Deut: 23:11; 23:13.

⁵⁹ The phrase also occurs in Judith 6:11 in recounting Holofernes being led to Bethulia. But both the referent of "camp" (the Assyrian military camp) and the function of the phrase are different.

The gate of verse 12 is, of course, a city gate. Jesus suffered outside the city of Jerusalem (cf. John 19:17-20). Just as Jesus went out of the city to suffer, so too the readers are to leave their city and share in his reproach.

Why are the readers being called to leave their city? Because they are seeking the city to come, knowing, as Rahab knew, that their earthly city will not last. The oracle of 12:25 foresees an imminent eschatological event in which the visible things of this world will be "shaken" (12:26). All that will remain are the things that cannot be shaken, most notably the "unshakeable kingdom," an alternative way of referring to the coming city (12:28). In "a little while" the "one who is coming will come" (10:37). At that time all things will be placed in subjection to the Son (2:8), his enemies will be made his footstool (1:12) and the heavens and earth will be rolled up like a garment and changed (1:10-12). On the horizon the author sees events like those described in Revelation 21. The heavenly Jerusalem is soon to descend. The earthly city will be destroyed and replaced. But what earthly city does the author have in view? The parallelism of 13:11-14 provides the answer. The city the readers are to leave is the city outside of which Jesus suffered. The city the readers are to leave is the earthly shadow of the city which is to come. They are being called to leave Jerusalem because it will be destroyed. That is the content of the oracle which they find difficult to heed.

In an insightful and refreshingly sane study of Hebrews (though still riddled with some anachronism) Peter Walker has sensed the force of this parallelism and stated that in this passage the author's "choice of 'camp' cannot be interpreted in such

a way that a reference to the city of Jerusalem is totally excluded."⁶⁰ He also recognizes that the point being made here is that the readers "were required to make a choice between Jesus and Jerusalem."⁶¹ However, Walker unfortunately overlooks the significance of Rahab and fails to allow his insightful analysis of Hebrews to lead to its logical end. Rather than take his own insights at face value he capitulates to the pressure of consensus that axiomatically spiritualizes the language of 13:13, leading him to describe it as a call to leave Jerusalem "in a spiritual sense."⁶² But as the next chapter will demonstrate, relatively new external evidence establishes that there is nothing figurative or spiritualized about Hebrews 13:13. As the anticipatory parallel with Rahab's example indicates, the author is calling upon his readers to literally leave Jerusalem before it is destroyed.

Conclusion

Barnabas Lindars was right when he insisted that Hebrews 11 is not an optional extra or devotional aside in the book but an essential part of the argument as a whole.⁶³ At several points the commendations of Hebrews 11 are integral to understanding things said elsewhere in the epistle. This is especially true for the climactic, summative exhortation. Many elements of the hero list of chapter 11 were crafted with this exhortation in view. Most notably, the hero list was designed to culminate with Rahab at its pinnacle. Contrary to the assumptions of both traditional and feminist critics, Rahab is no minor appendage to the list. The list is deliberately

⁶⁰ Peter W.L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 217.

⁶¹ *Jesus and the Holy City*, 221.

⁶² *Jesus and the Holy City*, 221.

⁶³ Lindars, "Rhetorical Structure," 401.

gynocentric because Rahab's commendation is crucial to the author's overall rhetorical strategy. Because of androcentric assumptions and the failure to examine the Old Testament passage to which the commendation actually refers, scholars have missed this completely. But once these mistakes are corrected, we learn that Rahab is commended because her action sets a clear precedent for the action the author wants his readers to embark on. The climactic exemplar is precedent for the climactic exhortation. The purpose of Hebrews cannot be properly understood without appreciating this. Harold Attridge has suggested that "it may be significant that the series [of heroes] concludes with Rahab the harlot."⁶⁴ Indeed.

⁶⁴ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 344.

Chapter Eight

The Riddle's Key and Its Second Temple Jewish Context

Introduction

It has often been observed that the key to the riddle of Hebrews is its thirteenth chapter, especially the central section.¹ Numerous scholars have tackled this passage or key parts of it head-on with little success unlocking the riddle.² Helmut Koester has famously written that "Hebrews 13:9-14 is among the most

¹ This was the premise of Floyd V. Filson, *'Yesterday': A Study of Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13* (London: SCM, 1967). Filson's contention was examined in detail in Jukka Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbief 13* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1973). Thurén concluded that Filson's proposal "ist sicher erwägenswert" (p. 55), accepted its main premise and argued that Hebrews 13 is the kernel upon which the rest of the epistle was built. Dieter Lührmann is representative of those who object to seeing Hebrews 13 as the key to the epistle. He states that Hebrews 13 "ist nicht der 'Schlüssel' zum Verständnis des Briefes" but a summary and restatement of several of the themes of Hebrews 1-12. See his "Der Hohepriester außerhalb des Lagers (Hebr 13:12)," *ZNW* 69 (1978): 186. Lührmann presents a false dichotomy. Hebrews 13 is a particular kind of summary that goes beyond restating previous material to extending and clarifying the argument, revealing its fuller significance for the situation of the audience.

² In addition to discussion in the commentaries, see Clarence Russell Williams, "A Word Study of Hebrews 13," *JBL* 30/2 (1911): 129-36; Jean Cambier, "Eschatologie ou Hellenisme dans L'Épître aux Hébreux: Une étude sur μένειν et l'exhortation finale de l'épître," *Salesianum* 11/1 (1949): 62-96; Helmut Koester, "'Outside the Camp': Hebrews 13.9-14," *HTR* 55 (1962): 299-315; James W. Thompson, "Outside the Camp: A Study of Heb 13:9-14," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 53-63; Lührmann, "Der Hohepriester," 178-86; A.T. Hanson, "The Reproach of the Messiah in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *SE* VII (1982): 231-40; L. Paul Trudinger, "The Gospel Meaning of the Secular: Reflections on Hebrews 13:10-13," *EvQ* 54 (1982): 235-37; Wolfgang Schenk, "Die Paränese Hebr 13,16 im Kontext des Hebräerbriefes—Einer Fallstudie semiotisch-orientierter Textinterpretation und Sachkritik," *ST* 39/2 (1985): 73-106; T.C. Smith, "An Exegesis of Hebrews 13:1-17," *Faith and Mission* 7/1 (1989): 70-78; Darell J. Pursiful, *The Cultic Motif in the Spirituality of the Book of Hebrews* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 137-45; Peter Walker, "Jerusalem in Hebrews 13:9-14 and the Dating of the Epistle," *TynBul* 45/1 (1994): 39-71; Marie E. Isaacs, "Hebrews 13.9-16 Revisited," *NTS* 43 (1997): 268-84; Norman H. Young, "'Bearing His Reproach' (Heb 13.9-14)," *NTS* 48 (2002): 243-61. James A. Sanders, "Outside the Camp," *USQR* 24/3 (1969): 239-46 is a sermon that makes some useful comparison with Old Testament texts not usually considered in relation to this passage. Despite what the main title suggests, Richard W. Johnson, *Going Outside the Camp: The Sociological Function of the Levitical Critique in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 209; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) contains little that is useful for understanding this passage.

difficult passages of the entire New Testament."³ Scholars frequently echo him on this point. James Thompson, for example, declares that "Hebrews 13:9-14 is one of the most complex passages in Hebrews, if not the entire New Testament."⁴ Hebrews 13 is the key to the riddle, but it is itself an enigma.

Having completed his main arguments, here for the first time the author dispenses with subtleties and directly addresses the situation of his audience. Interpretive difficulties arise because he assumes his readers' knowledge of the situation and thus does not explain himself. Nor does he explain how the arguments of the rest of the epistle relate to what he says here. That relationship would have been obvious to his audience, but modern scholars find his words enigmatic.

Hebrews 13:8-16 states:

⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and [will be] forever. ⁹Do not be carried away by all kinds of unfamiliar teachings (διδασκαίς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις), for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by meats (βρώμασιν) by means of which those who walk [in them] (οἱ περιπατοῦντες) have not benefited. ¹⁰We have an altar from which those who minister in the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary for sin by the high priest are burned outside the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς). ¹²Therefore, in order to purify/sanctify (ἀγιάσει) the people through his blood, Jesus also suffered outside the gate (ἔξω τῆς πύλης). ¹³Thus, let us go out (ἔξερχώμεθα) to him outside the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) bearing his reproach, ¹⁴for here we do not have an enduring city but instead we eagerly seek the one that is coming. ¹⁵Therefore, through him let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God in everything, that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name. ¹⁶But do not neglect the doing of good and sharing, for by such sacrifices God is pleased (τοιούταις γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ θεός).

Several elements of this passage have been the focus of discussion. The most important is the climactic exhortation in 13:13: "Thus, let us go out to him outside the

³ Koester, "Outside the Camp," 299.

⁴ Thompson, "Outside the Camp," 53.

camp bearing his reproach." It is generally agreed that this is a specific instruction that the original recipients would have understood. But what is the camp and what does it mean to go outside of it? What exactly is the author urging his audience to do? Secondly, in v.9 the author warns his readers not to be carried away by "all kinds of unfamiliar teachings," more commonly translated "varied and strange teachings." Nowhere else in the epistle does he directly address false teachings and the way he does so here seems sudden and awkward. It is not clear how or even whether this warning is related to the concerns expressed in rest of the epistle. Nonetheless, some scholars have used this verse as the prism through which the epistle is interpreted. This has led many to misread the Christological arguments of chs. 1-12 as rebutting teachings about Jesus which the author finds heretical.⁵ Others observe that in its context these "strange teachings" have to do with foods of some kind and the "altar" mentioned in v. 10. The concern with "strange teachings" may not extend to the rest of the epistle. Thus, there has been discussion about what sort of teachings might be in view and whether the altar refers to the Eucharist or something else.

It is my contention that the continuing conundrum of Hebrews 13 is not due entirely to the author's enigmatic expression. In several ways scholars who address this passage have rendered themselves blind to its proper interpretation. As we saw in Chapter Two, many read Hebrews 13 as if the parting of the ways is an accomplished fact and as a result import anachronistic ideas into it. There has been almost no effort to situate this passage in its proper Second Temple Jewish context beyond looking for verbal parallels in Philo. Furthermore, because they have allowed themselves to be convinced that the epistle could not have been written to

⁵ The most recent example is Michael Goulder, "Hebrews and the Ebionites," *NTS* 49/3 (2003): 393-46.

Palestine they are unable to accept at face value either vv. 9-10 or the implications of the parallelism in vv. 11-14. Other habits endemic in the interpretation of this passage include treating it in isolation from chapters 1-12 and paying insufficient attention to its structure. Consequently important clues are overlooked. Lastly, recent writers have failed to utilize important new external evidence that settles the meaning of the word "camp" in the central exhortation.

The remainder of this chapter will reexamine elements of Hebrews 13 in a way that overcomes these common failings. It will begin by very briefly addressing the unity of the epistle and clarifying the function of its last chapter. This will be followed by a discussion of the interpretations that have been offered for the summative exhortation in 13:13-14. After surveying this plethora of interpretations, evidence from other Second Temple Jewish texts will be presented that proves the interpretation presented in Chapter Seven. The camp is Jerusalem; outside the camp is outside Jerusalem; the call to go outside the camp is a call to leave Jerusalem. This evidence also informs us about the specific kinds of contexts in which camp terminology was used. This information will be utilized in Chapter Nine to shed additional light on Hebrews 13 and help reconstruct the historical situation addressed by the epistle.

The Unity of Hebrews

Seeking to counter prevailing trends, Marie Isaacs rightly insists that Hebrews 1-12 is the interpretive "life-line" that "should act as a determinant for understanding

chapter 13."⁶ Why then do so many scholars treat the chapter in isolation from the rest of the epistle? For most the reason is that they have been convinced that Hebrews 1-12 is a sermon to which an "epistolary postscript" has been appended. The perceived change in style at 13:1 is thought to indicate that the author is moving on to different topics than those addressed in the "sermon." For a minority of scholars it is axiomatic that differences of style imply different authorship (a dubious axiom when applied stringently). Thus, over the years a few scholars have declared ch. 13 unoriginal to the composition.

The last major commentator to seriously dispute the epistle's unity was George Wesley Buchanan.⁷ According to Buchanan, Hebrews 13 is a "scissors-and-paste composition of collected bits of literature" that could not have been written by the author of chs. 1-12.⁸ Furthermore, he maintained that ch. 13 is so fragmentary that it may have even been written by more than one hand. I am aware of no reputable scholar who has been convinced by these assertions. Nearly everyone agrees with Attridge that whatever stylistic changes are detected in ch. 13, they are outweighed by the "obvious thematic continuities with the preceding chapters."⁹ Responding directly to Buchanan, William Lane documents evident links between this material and the preceding chapters that include vocabulary, lines of argumentation, the recurrence of key concepts, etc. (see further below).¹⁰ Furthermore, it is not coincidental that Buchanan dismissed the one chapter that

⁶ Isaacs, "Revisited," 269.

⁷ For an overview of literature questioning and defending the unity of Hebrews prior to Buchanan, see Filson, 'Yesterday', 15-16.

⁸ George Wesley Buchanan *To the Hebrews* (AB 36; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 267.

⁹ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 384.

¹⁰ William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols. WBC 47a-b; Dallas: Word, 1991), 496-507; cf. Isaacs, "Revisited," 270-72.

contradicts several aspects of his peculiar reading of Hebrews 1-12. One suspects that his dismissal of the chapter was really just an *ad hoc* means of preserving his novel theory.

A few contemporary scholars express suspicion that 13:22-25 may be a pseudo-Pauline addition,¹¹ but Hurst is representative of the majority opinion when he states, "there are no compelling reasons for rejecting chapter 13 as the original conclusion of the epistle" (including vv. 22-25).¹² However, A.J.M. Wedderburn has very recently resuscitated the long dormant allegation that chs. 1-12 and ch. 13 were written by different authors and for different situations.¹³ He offers several arguments in support of this position. None are presented as determinative but he believes that together they form a strong cumulative case. At the heart of his case is the crucial claim that the argument of Hebrews 13 is not integrated with the argument of chs. 1-12. He accepts that Lane's arguments in favor of the epistle's unity successfully rebut Buchanan but points out that points of contact can be explained by the later author's familiarity with the earlier text. Lane's arguments fail to establish the epistle's integrity because they fail to show "that the first 12 chapters were written with ch. 13 as their intended conclusion and that their message *must* be

¹¹ Most recently Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (3 vols.; EKK; Zurich: Benziger and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990, 1993, 1997), 1.23; 3.409-416. The strongest argument against any portion of Hebrews 13 being a pseudo-Pauline addition is the fact that there is no corresponding opening. If someone wanted to pass Hebrews off as a Pauline composition the easiest and most convincing way to do that would have been to include an opening modeled on the letters of the Pauline corpus. Similarities between Hebrews 13:22-25 and the closings of Paul's letters are due primarily to literary convention, not impersonation. Neither is the mention of Timothy (13:23) evidence of pseudo-Paulinism. Paul was not the only leader in the Christ-movement who knew Timothy well-enough to be concerned to pass on news regarding his welfare. For assessment of additional features that have led a few scholars to suspect a pseudo-Pauline addition, see Knut Backhaus, "Der Hebräerbrief und die Paulus-Schule," *BZ* 37/2 (1993): 192-96.

¹² L.D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 109.

¹³ A.J.M. Wedderburn, "The 'Letter' to the Hebrews and Its Thirteenth Chapter," *NTS* 50/3 (2004): 390-405.

understood in the light of that chapter and are only to be understood properly in that light."¹⁴ With this statement Wedderburn effectively lists the one criterion that he thinks must (and cannot) be met in order to disprove his cumulative case.

One could argue on the basis of a handful of passages that Hebrews 1-12 was composed with ch. 13 as its intended conclusion. But our discussion in Chapter Seven provides a ready example that demonstrates that Wedderburn's criterion can easily be met. There it was shown that Rahab's commendation (11:31) is far more important to the epistle's rhetorical strategy than anyone had imagined. The list of heroes was designed to culminate with her example because the author was particularly concerned for his audience to imitate her faithful action. The specific action to which he alludes is Rahab's abandonment of her city. The author foresees the destruction of the recipient's city and warns his readers that they must follow her precedent if they are to be saved from destruction. Just as Rahab was spared the fate of her compatriots by leaving her city, so the readers must leave their city. Rahab's commendation was carefully planned with the epistle's climactic exhortation (13:13-14) in view. This is confirmed by the fact that 13:13-14 was deliberately structured to parallel Joshua 6:23-24, the passage to which Rahab's commendation refers. In a stroke of literary genius the author wove together Hebrews 11:31, 13:13-14 and Joshua 6:23-24. Once the integral relationship between these passages is recognized it becomes obvious that 11:31 and its Old Testament referent are necessary in order to fully appreciate 13:13-14; the former anticipates the latter. Moreover, the significance of 11:31 cannot be appreciated apart from 13:13-14; the latter is the intended compliment of the former. Wedderburn's chief criterion is fulfilled and his

¹⁴ Wedderburn, "Thirteenth Chapter," 404.

supporting arguments are rendered moot. Much more could be said in reply to Wedderburn and further examples can be adduced to demonstrate the integral links between ch. 13 and the rest of the epistle, but for our purposes this one example will suffice.

In addition to clear links between chapters 1-12 and 13, there is a strong stylistic reason to accept the integrity of the epistle. Put most simply, there is no abrupt change of style at 13:1. Most commentators and translations take the inferential conjunction *διό* at the beginning of 12:28 to mark an inference which extends only through verse 29. However, dividing the text between 12:29 and 13:1 is artificial and obscures the transition. The inference introduced by *διό* actually serves a double function. It obviously concludes the preceding section but it simultaneously serves as the introduction to the next section. Contrary to common assertions, there is a transition between Hebrews 12 and 13. Here we see an example of our author's use of overlapping constituents as a transition device.¹⁵ This can be illustrated by the author's use of terms related to *εὐαρέστος*.

Hebrews 12:28 states: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which (*δι' ἧς*) we should acceptably render [cultic] service to God (*λατρεύωμεν εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ*) with reverence and awe." In 13:15 the readers are instructed, "through him (*δι' αὐτοῦ*) let us offer (*ἀναφέρωμεν*) a sacrifice of praise to God through everything." The notion of acceptable cultic service is closely paralleled in 13:16 when the author exhorts his readers to do good and share because "by such sacrifices God is pleased" (*τοιαύταις*

¹⁵ For a discussion of the author's use of this technique, see George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 102-104. Guthrie misses this particular example of the technique as well as the inclusio that 12:28 introduces.

γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ θεός). The parallel between 12:28 and 13:16 is difficult to adequately capture in English translation but is obvious from the Greek text. The ideas of acceptably serving God and offering acceptable or pleasing sacrifices to God form an *inclusio* that spans the artificial chapter division. Moreover, it links this passage with the subsequent benediction where the exhortation to offer to God pleasing service and sacrifice is reciprocated: "[May the God of peace] make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight (τὸ εὐάρεστον ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ)" (13:21).¹⁶ The moral exhortations in verses 1-7 are not a sudden intrusion of alien topics. Rather, both in content and function they parallel the definition of the "sacrifice of praise" in verses 15-17. Verses 1-7 define how to "acceptably render [cultic] service to God" (12:28) (this will be elaborated upon in Chapter Nine).

The Function of Hebrews 13

The introductory function of 12:28-29 should be considered primary for the purpose of outlining the text. The main structural shift occurs at 12:28 rather than 13:1.¹⁷ Though not observing the overlapping functions of 12:28-29, Craig Koester and Walter Übelacker rightly discern that here is the beginning of the new unit and

¹⁶ Though he does not describe 12:28-13:21 as a single literary unit, David A. deSilva likewise recognizes that the use of terms related to εὐάρεστος in 12:28, 13:16 and 13:21 links the entire section together (*Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* [Grand Rapids: 2000], 484). Lane goes further and recognizes that an *"inclusio"* is established between 12:28 and 13:21" but oddly thinks that this "literary device serves to identify 13:1-21 as a self-contained unit of thought" (*Hebrews*, 498). He sees 13:1-21 as giving specification to the exhortation of 12:28 (p. 506). No clear reason is given as to why one should see 13:1-21 rather than 12:28-13:21 as the self-contained unit of thought.

¹⁷ Lane considers this position: "the beginning of the concluding unit of the homily may actually be found at 12:28" (*Hebrews*, 498). Several times he accepts this but does not consistently follow through, repeatedly treating 13:1 as the beginning of the unit.

mark the entirety of 12:28-13:21 as a peroration.¹⁸ If by peroration it is simply meant that these verses are a concluding summary that recapitulates and applies points previously made, then this is correct.¹⁹ Though not using such precise terminology, other scholars have sensed that this is the basic function for the bulk of Hebrews 13. For example, Attridge notes that this material "does not simply repeat what has come before, but focuses and clarifies certain key themes and thus provides a basis for their climactic hortatory application."²⁰ Marie Isaacs similarly observes that 13:1-21 "does not, as some have suggested, introduce something new. Rather it functions as a summary of the essentials of what has already been said. Precisely because this is so the author is free to express himself cryptically, without explication."²¹

Several things follow from recognizing that 12:28-13:21 form a "peroration." First, because of its condensed and largely summarizing nature, one cannot properly understand the peroration without reference to the material in chs. 1-12. On the other hand, this also means that one will not have fully grasped the intent and meaning of the arguments in chs. 1-12 apart from 12:28-13:21. There is circularity involved in this but it is non-vicious. So which do we begin with? Both. But logical priority must be given to 12:28-13:21. In a sense, Hebrews is a book that is best understood "back to front." Even though they were not successful in unlocking the

¹⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 554-56; Walter G. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu exordium, narratio und postscriptum* (Hebr 1-2 und 13, 22-25) (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), 220-23; idem, "Paraenesis or Paraclesis—Hebrews as a Test Case," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen; BZNW 125; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 325.

¹⁹ Koester and Übelacker represent a tradition of attempting to fit the structure of Hebrews into the formal categories of ancient rhetorical theory. This tendency is fueled by the popularity of classifying Hebrews as a sermon which is treated as a type of speech (Koester even habitually refers to Hebrews as a speech). However, as Chapter Six demonstrates, Hebrews is an epistle. The author undoubtedly utilized rhetorical devices and was concerned with how the epistle would sound when read aloud. But there is a danger that the author's argumentation will be distorted if we impose on it the categories of formal rhetoric as if it were a speech written for the forum.

²⁰ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 384.

²¹ Isaacs, "Revisited," 272.

riddle of Hebrews, Filson and Thüren rightly intuited this when they sought to study the whole of Hebrews in the light of its final chapter.²² Second, the main statements in the peroration should be viewed as either summaries of points made earlier in the epistle or inferences drawn from the earlier arguments which hitherto have not been explicitly stated. Lastly, the main concerns of the peroration must be taken as main concerns of the argument of the entire epistle.

The Interpretive Quagmire of Hebrews 13:13

It is widely recognized that the call to go to Jesus "outside the camp" (13:13) is the summative exhortation of the epistle. But what is the camp? What does it mean to go outside the camp? In Chapter Two we saw that the most popular interpretation of this verse anachronistically interprets it as a call to leave Judaism. In the view of some writers the author does not believe the readers have ever sufficiently disassociated themselves from the Jewish community. He is saying that it is now time for them to finally "abandon all attachment to Judaism."²³ More common is the traditional "relapse theory" (as if Judaism is something that one can *fall* into, much less again!). The audience had left Judaism but had recently begun to associate with the synagogue again. They are now called to make a "complete separation from their former Jewish life" and "break away again from the Jews."²⁴ Bruce's influential presentation of this view nuances it somewhat by interpreting the camp as "the

²² Filson, 'Yesterday'; Thüren, *Lobopfer*.

²³ Steve Motyer, "The Temple in Hebrews: Is It There?" in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 189. He refers to this view as a "revised relapse theory."

²⁴ Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22, 11.

established fellowship and ordinances of Judaism."²⁵ In line with Manson's reconstruction of the situation, Bruce believed the call to leave meant "leaving the shelter of their *collegia licitia* for a fellowship which invited the hostile attention of imperial law" because "the future lay not with the 'camp' but with the Gentile mission."²⁶

Another prominent approach to this verse takes inspiration from Philo's allegorical interpretations of Exodus 32:17-19 and Exodus 33:7-11 (*Ebr.* 96-100, 124; *Det.* 160; *Gig.* 54). In the first passage Moses comes down from the mountain and hears "a sound like war in the camp" caused by the Israelites' bacchic celebration around the Golden Calf. In the second Moses is described as pitching his tent "outside the camp." According to Philo the first signifies the mortal and disturbed "camp" of normal bodily existence while the second signifies the person who leaves that "war" behind in favor of the peaceful life of rational and happy souls. Moses' pitching his tent outside the camp represents the rational person's unconcern with bodily desires and the development of virtue in order to prepare the mind to worship and contemplate God. Interpreting Hebrews 13:13 through this grid, Windisch rejected the idea that it was a call to leave Jerusalem but instead saw it calling for a divorce from the earthly world and earthly existence in general.²⁷ Moffatt took its author to be saying that material interests of the worldly life must be forsaken if the soul is to enjoy the inward vision of God.²⁸ Thompson understands it to call for Christians to forsake the world of sense perception and renounce the securities of the

²⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 381.

²⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 382.

²⁷ Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (HNT 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Siebeck), 1931), 119.

²⁸ James Moffatt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 236; cf. Robert H. Smith, *Hebrews* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 177.

material realm in order to live the lifestyle of a pilgrim people who know that they possess unseen securities.²⁹ Grässer's view is similar; it is a call to follow Jesus' example and live in the midst of this world as a stranger who expects no help from earthly means of safety but instead relies upon invisible mercy and grace.³⁰

Alternative interpretations abound. In the view of Helmut Koester the author of Hebrews understands the phrase "outside the camp" quite differently than Philo does. In Hebrews it is the same as "the worldliness of the world itself and the place where men are exposed to the experience of this world rather than secluded and protected from it."³¹ Thus the call is to forsake all religious ritual and regulation as a means of knowing the divine presence; it is a *de facto* call to secularity.³² Another explanation simply identifies the exhortation with the pilgrimage theme of ch. 11. Thus, it means "venture forward into the unknown;"³³ "behave like pilgrims on earth, like foreigners who must expect to be held in contempt, but always comforted by the hope of the country to come."³⁴ Another sees it as a simple call to share Christ's humiliation.³⁵ More specifically, this is a call to discipleship by following Jesus in "cross-bearing."³⁶ Pfitzner combines figurative pilgrimage and cross-bearing with a

²⁹ Thompson, "Outside the Camp," 53-63.

³⁰ Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3.385-86.

³¹ Koester, "Outside the Camp," 302; cf. Gerd Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrieff* (Gerd Mohn: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), 104.

³² Koester, "Outside the Camp," 303, *passim*.

³³ R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews* (NCB; Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 246.

³⁴ Jean Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (trans. A.W. Heathcote and P.J. Allcock; London: Epworth, 1970), 123. It should be noted that Héring believed that this verse was open to a more mundane interpretation if we could know that the readers were in Jerusalem: leave the city.

³⁵ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 717; Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 169; cf. John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter* (trans. William B. Johnston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 210.

³⁶ Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 735-36.

call to leave Judaism.³⁷ DeSilva recasts them in terms of a patron-client relationship: it is "a call to render gratitude in equal measure" and an invitation to "make a like return to their Benefactor" by bearing reproach on his behalf. In doing so "they leave behind their place in the camp, in human society, refusing with Abraham to look back."³⁸

Williamson has seen here a call to mystical ascent.³⁹ According to Stedman the readers are to abandon the religious establishment, whether of Judaism or 'distorted' Christianity.⁴⁰ Taking his cue from Manson and Bruce, Richard Johnson casts the author in the mold of a missions-minded Southern Baptist pastor.⁴¹ The exhortation calls for a commitment to world mission; readers are being urged to move beyond their in-group and proclaim the gospel to Gentiles. On the other hand, Craig Koester casts the author in the mold of a mainline Protestant. The camp represents "urban life, with all its complexity." The exhortation calls for the renouncement of opportunities for wealth and prestige in order to suffer with the people of God. It is a positive summons to faithful service ministering to strangers, the afflicted and prisoners who live outside the mainstream of urban life.⁴² Finally, seeking to undercut the glut of interpretations on the market, Attridge claims that it is "likely that the image of the camp is designed to be evocative rather than definitive.

³⁷ Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 199-200; so also Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 422.

³⁸ DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 501-502.

³⁹ Ronald Williamson, "The Background of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *ExpTim* 85 (1975-76): 234. Previously he took the view that it was a call to disassociate from the synagogue (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [London: Epworth, 1964], 131).

⁴⁰ Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 154.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Going Outside the Camp*, 147-48, 150, 152-53.

⁴² Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 571.

What it suggests is the realm of security and traditional holiness, however that is grounded or understood."⁴³

Clearly, Hebrews 13:13 has proven to be an interpretive morass. Some of the proffered interpretations defy plausibility, others are merely out of place in a first-century context, all are mistaken. In the dominant interpretation the word *camp* is presumed to refer to competing positions or parties as it does in modern English, e.g., "Tonight both camps claimed victory for their candidate in the debate." Judaism and Christianity are the "camps" between which the recipients must make a final decision. Yet, no exegetical support is cited in support of this usage; it is simply taken for granted that an ancient writer would have employed the same metaphor. As a result there has been little effort to investigate how the word might have been understood within the context of Second Temple Judaism. The Philonic interpretation makes some effort to do this but the interpretation is implausible. Hebrews 13:11 makes it clear that the author does not derive the camp terminology from the narrative of Exodus 32-33 but from descriptions of sacrificial rites (cf. Exod 29:14; Lev 4:12, 21; 16:27). Secondly, the epistle simply does not talk about escaping bodily or material concerns in order to develop virtue and contemplate God. The Philonic interpretation imposes alien notions onto to the passage that are arguably incompatible with the outlook of the epistle as a whole. Most scholars recognize this but few venture to examine other Second Temple Jewish texts to see what light they might shed. Why? Most of the remaining texts that might shed light on this passage have a Palestinian provenance and it is an axiom of contemporary Hebrews

⁴³ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 399. Attridge's view is endorsed by Pursiful, *Cultic Motif*, 144.

scholarship that the author and readers are "Hellenistic" Jews. Palestinian sources are therefore largely ignored as irrelevant. Lastly, each of these interpretations disregards the implications of the parallelism in 13:11-14.

Against this phalanx of mistaken proposals, I argued in Chapter Seven that "the camp" refers to Jerusalem and therefore the call to "go outside the camp" is a call to leave Jerusalem. This interpretation is based on the parallelism of Hebrews 13:11-14 and the striking anticipation of this passage in Rahab's commendation (11:31). Another passage in the New Testament also implies that "the camp" was a designation for Jerusalem. Revelation 20:9 describes the final end-time uprising of Satan and his forces. They are depicted as marching up to Jerusalem and surrounding it before they are consumed by fire from heaven. Jerusalem, however, is not referred to by name but instead as "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην). The καὶ is epexegetical; the camp of the saints and the beloved city are one and the same. So another New Testament document provides us with evidence that the call to go outside the camp would have been understood in reference to Jerusalem. This is a simple but significant exegetical conclusion.

On rare occasion commentators have accepted the implications of the parallelism and acknowledged Hebrews 13:13 as a call to leave Jerusalem.⁴⁴ Tom Wright seems to take this view in his recent popular-level commentary. According to Wright, the point the author is making "is that the followers of Jesus are to be happy

⁴⁴ E.g., Robert Milligan, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1977; orig. 1875), 490-91; Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 235. This was one of the reasons why Buchanan insisted ch. 13 was written by someone other than the author of chs. 1-12. He believed the call to leave Jerusalem was inconsistent with his thesis that chs. 1-12 were written to a group of people who had moved to Jerusalem to await the advent kingdom of God. But surely a group who moved to Jerusalem could later be called to leave it.

to leave the city and its Temple, even though their fellow Jews will regard them as traitors and heap shame on them."⁴⁵ Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra draws similar implications from the parallelism: "the author is asking his audience in a concrete, geographical sense to leave *Jerusalem* and its temple and wait for the real, future sacred space."⁴⁶ The example of Rahab corroborates this. As she abandoned her city to destruction by going outside the camp of Israel, so the readers are to go outside the camp by abandoning their city—the city outside of whose gates Jesus was crucified.

While the numerous proposals surveyed above are each mistaken, some of the things they mention are entailed by what the author is actually asking his readers to do. To leave Jerusalem in response to the oracle is a decisive act of discipleship. Undoubtedly those who do so will have to rely on unseen grace, forsake material comforts, live like a pilgrim, suffer for being a Christ-follower, etc.. Nonetheless, the verse does not call the readers to do or endure any of these things *per se*.⁴⁷ Rather, they are either entailed by the action they *are* called to do or the byproducts of it. These byproducts are easily anticipated and would have contributed to the readers reticence. Thus, throughout the epistle the author prepares his audience to bear what they must as the consequence of faithful obedience to the word of exhortation.

It should also be noted that one type of interpretive proposal comes closer than the others to being correct. Some scholars speak of 13:13 as a call to leave Jewish institutions and practices. Usually they have in mind participation in the synagogue,

⁴⁵ Tom Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2003), 174.

⁴⁶ Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity* (WUNT 163; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 192. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁷ Attridge (*Hebrews*, 399) claims that the significance of the call to go to Jesus "outside the camp" is indicated by the participle phrase τὸν ὀνειδισμόν αὐτοῦ φέροντες ("bearing his reproach"). Presumably he sees this as a participle of purpose. I fail to see any reason for categorizing it as anything other than a text-book example of a circumstantial participle.

circumcision, dietary laws and common meals—things which the author nowhere addresses and which are unaffected by his arguments. The reason scholars think these particular things are in view is, again, the axiom that the recipients must be located in the Diaspora. What the author's argument actually addresses, though, are the land, the city of Jerusalem, the Temple, the sacrificial cult and the High Priesthood. The author's argument is designed to persuade his addressees that in light of who Christ is and what he has done it is permissible to leave behind the holy city, its Temple and the cultus. Though his overall reconstruction of the situation fails to persuade, Kosmala rightly senses this when he describes the author as urging his audience to separate from the Jerusalem Temple and its cult as did the community which produced the Damascus Document.⁴⁸ Marie Isaacs senses this as well. She understands the author to be arguing for the abandonment of the Mosaic cult and shrine.⁴⁹ On her view, however, this is emotional rather than literal since she envisions the readers to be mourning for the destruction of the Temple.

Because of the central place held by Jerusalem and its Temple in the religious thought of most Jews, any call to leave the city is tantamount to calling people to abandon central Jewish institutions and practices. This raises the possibility of an objection to the view that has been advocated here. Might it not be possible that the call to leave Jerusalem is merely a call to leave Jerusalem "spiritually"? Perhaps the camp *is* Jerusalem. But why not see the camp/Jerusalem as being symbolic for Jewish institutions or practices generally? My first response would be to argue that the text

⁴⁸ Hans Kosmala, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen: Studien zum Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (StPB 1; Leiden: Brill, 1959), 405, 409-410.

⁴⁹ Isaacs, "Revisited," 282; idem, *Reading Hebrews & James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 159.

itself does not give us any reason to take the call in anything other than, as Stökl Ben Ezra put it, "a concrete, geographical sense." Secondly, the anticipation of the call in Rahab's commendation does not lend itself to this reading. Rahab really left her city and went outside the camp to be saved. The readers are being called to imitate her example and really leave their city. This is an action full of symbolic significance, to be sure. And in their going they symbolically go to Jesus. But to cast the exhortation as a merely symbolic "leaving of Jerusalem" by a community in the Diaspora fails to appreciate the full extent of what this call symbolizes. It should also be remembered that this sort of action is not completely without precedent. The covenanters responsible for the Damascus Document appear to have forsaken Jerusalem and its cultus. While their withdrawal from these Jewish institutions was full of symbolic significance as well, there was nothing merely symbolic about it. To the contrary, the symbolism of their rejection of the Temple cult was all the more pointed because they had literally, physically left the city to dwell on their own until the Temple and priesthood should be purified. So too with Hebrews. The symbolic significance of what the author is encouraging his readers to do is fully appreciated only when it is recognized that it is not merely symbolic. The recipients of Hebrews are being called to do something of biblical proportions—an action comparable to those commemorated in scripture. They are to act in faith in this matter and take their place right alongside Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Rahab before them.

Fortunately, there is external evidence to bring to bear on the issue that definitively precludes a purely symbolic reading of Hebrews 13:13. Important Second Temple Jewish texts inform us about how *camp* and *outside the camp* would have been widely understood by Jews in the first century, strongly confirming the

interpretation I have advocated. They also provide additional insight that will help us unlock additional elements within Hebrews 13 and thereby shed further light on the situation the author addresses.

"Outside the Camp" in the Context of Second Temple Judaism

The Temple Scroll and 4QMMT discovered at Qumran are important windows into the disputes that led to the rise of competing Jewish groups in the Second Temple period. They confirm that disagreement about halakhah⁵⁰ (Jewish law) was an important factor in the rise of Jewish sects.⁵¹ (It may be better to refer to parties or faction than sects,⁵² but this has no bearing on the argument here.). It was not the only factor, but it was at least as important as the theological factors exclusively cited at one time.⁵³ More importantly, we learn that halakhic disagreements were prominent in the ongoing disputes between sects and fueled their antagonism toward one another. These disputes were important in the creation and maintenance of Jewish identities distinct from the common Judaism of the

⁵⁰ Some find it problematic to use this term for non-rabbinic legal systems. However, other than *halakhah* "there simply is no term that can effectively describe the phenomenon of Jewish law, whether in the Qumran corpus, other second temple literature, or in its more usual rabbinic guise" (Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic Halakhah," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity* [ed. James R. Davila; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003], 5).

⁵¹ Albert Baumgarten acknowledges that 4QMMT's halakhic agenda appears to confirm that disputes about the law were a source of sectarian impulse. However, he argues that "the nature of legal positions adhered to by the different sects was almost as arbitrary and erratic as their eschatological visions." A comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon of sectarianism needs to go beyond disputes over halakhah, calendars and devotion to specific legal authorities since none of these inevitably lead to the flourishing of sectarianism. (Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* [JSJSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 79-80.) Baumgarten's basic point is correct; we need to avoid simplistic monocausal explanations. But in making this point Baumgarten seems to underestimate the prominent role that halakhic disputes did in fact play in Jewish sectarianism.

⁵² See John H. Elliot, "The Jewish Messianic Movement: From faction to sect," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific studies of the New Testament in its context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 75-80.

⁵³ Cf. Joseph M. Baumgarten, "Theological Elements in the Formulations of Qumran Law," in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. Shalom M. Paul, et al.; VTSup 94; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 33-34.

unaligned masses. Moreover, the positions taken with regard to disputed halakhic questions had a significant effect on how piety was expressed and how one evaluated the pietistic practices of others. The Temple Scroll and MMT testify to the fact that at the center of some of the more important debates was the interpretation and proper application of laws formulated in the Pentateuch in terms of tabernacle and camp. MMT even goes so far as to explicitly define what its authors meant by *tabernacle*, *camp* and *outside the camp*. Unfortunately, scholars have failed to perceive the significance this has for the interpretation of Hebrews 13:13 and the reconstruction of the situation the epistle addresses.

It has been more than a decade since MMT was officially published.⁵⁴ In that time scholarship on MMT has become a virtual cottage industry. While a number of scholars have compared the use of the phrase "works of the Law" in MMT and Paul, nothing similar has been produced to bring MMT's definitions of camp terminology to bear upon Hebrews (or, vice versa, Hebrews' use to bear upon MMT). Kampen's survey of MMT's significance for the New Testament does not even mention our epistle.⁵⁵ A small number of scholars writing on Hebrews have noted MMT's

⁵⁴ Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4, V Miḡṣat Ma'āšeh ha-Torah* (DJD X; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994). The relevant evidence from MMT was available a few years before the official publication. Qimron and Strugnell gave an overview of the contents of the document a decade earlier in "An Unpublished Halakhic Letter from Qumran," in *Biblical Archeology Today* (ed. Janet Amitai; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 400-407. In the late 1980s a transcription of the text began circulating among scholars. Working from the transcription and access to the unpublished work of Qimron and Strugnell, Lawrence H. Schiffman published several articles in which the relevant evidence is prominently discussed: "The Temple Scroll and the Systems of Jewish Law of the Second Temple Period," in *Temple Scroll Studies* (JSPSup 7; ed. George J. Brooke; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 245-55; idem, "The New Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect," *BA* 53/2 (1990): 64-73; idem, "Miḡṣat Ma'āšeh ha-Torah and the Temple Scroll," *RevQ* 14/3 (1990): 435-57. The text was unofficially published in Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1992), 180-220. There were two prior attempts to publish the text in 1990-92 but their distribution was stopped through legal action.

⁵⁵ John Kampen, "4QMMT and New Testament Studies," in *Reading 4QMMT: New Perspectives on Qumran Law and History* (ed. John Kampen and Moshe J. Bernstein; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 129-44.

definition in passing but fail to appreciate its significance.⁵⁶ I have found no examples of Hebrews specialists making use of the relevant evidence from the Temple Scroll even though it has been readily accessible for more than twenty years.⁵⁷ The neglect of these texts illustrates a point made in Chapter One: contemporary Hebrews scholarship has become insulated, to its detriment, from some important and fruitful developments in the study of the early Christ-movement and its Jewish context.

The Temple Scroll, MMT, Josephus and rabbinic literature testify that *camp* and *outside the camp* were legal terms of art with precise definitions during the Second Temple period. The proper application of these terms was crucial for the correct observance of halakhot regarding sacrifice and ritual purity. Any Judean wishing to offer sacrifice, celebrate the annual festivals or simply visit Jerusalem would have been familiar with the relevant halakhot and, to some degree, with their biblical basis. Jews like those responsible for the Temple Scroll and MMT disagreed with the definitions of these terms presupposed in the administration of Jerusalem and the Temple. In their view the definitions being applied in practice compromised the sanctity of the city and sanctuary. But the variance between the alternative definitions was confined to a very narrow range of meanings, all of which identified the camp with Jerusalem, the Temple complex (the *temenos*) or the sanctuary itself.

⁵⁶ Walker, "Jerusalem and Hebrews 13:9-14," 44; Randall C. Gleason, "The Eschatology of the Warning in Hebrews 10:26-31," *TynBul* 53/1 (2002): 103; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3.383; Markus Bockmuehl, "The Church in Hebrews," in *A Vision for the Church* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Micahel B. Thompson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 135. Only Gleason recognizes possible implications for a Palestinian destination. Johnson also mentions MMT—second-hand, unaware of its contents (*Going Outside the Camp*, 140).

⁵⁷ Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983). This edition corrects and expands a modern Hebrew edition published in 1977. The scroll itself first came into Yadin's possession during the 1967 Six Day War. For the intriguing story of its recovery, see Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985).

Furthermore, in their halakhic context as technical terms of art *camp* and *outside the camp* do not permit purely symbolic or metaphorical uses. Thus, we can be sure that any relatively devout Jew reading Hebrews would have immediately understood the significance of the call to "go outside the camp" as a call to leave Jerusalem and its cultus in a concrete, geographical sense.

The Hermeneutical Quandary of Second Temple Judaism

The phrase "outside the camp" is drawn directly from the Pentateuch. In narrative material the "camp" (מחנה / παρεμβολή) refers to the mobile complex in which the Israelites lived during the wilderness sojourn.⁵⁸ As such it is primarily a generic military term. This is the general, non-technical meaning of both מחנה and παρεμβολή. But in passages legislating procedures for sacrifice and purification, the camp takes on cultic significance and the phrase "outside the camp" (חור / έξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) becomes a technical term.

For several of the sacrificial ceremonies, particular actions must occur either inside or outside the camp.⁵⁹ With respect to purity laws, the boundaries of ritually pure space are the boundaries of the camp. People who become defiled through seminal emission, skin disease or contact with a corpse must go outside the camp for

⁵⁸ Exod 16:13; 19:17-17; Num 4:5, 15; 10:34; 11:1, 9, 26-30, 31-32; 14:44; 31:12, 13, 19, 24; Deut 2:14-15. The same usage is also found in the narrative of Joshua. In Numbers 11 the seventy elders are called to a meeting around the "tent" while "two men remained in the camp" (11:26). This presupposes either that the "tent" refers to the tent of the meeting which Moses pitched outside the camp (Ex 33:7), or that the area occupied by the tabernacle in the center of the camp was not considered a part of the camp proper (cf. Num 1:53 where the Levites are instructed to encamp between the tabernacle and the rest of the people).

⁵⁹ Prescriptive passages: Lev 4:12, 21; 6:11; 16:26, 27, 28; 17:3-7; Num 19:3, 7, 9. Descriptive passages: Lev 8:17; 9:11.

prescribed periods of time before they are allowed to reenter.⁶⁰ In certain cases a person is deemed more or less permanently impure and thus permanently excluded from the camp (e.g., those with non-healing skin diseases). Outside the camp is also the place of capital punishment, presumably because of the impurity of corpses.⁶¹ Even latrine areas must be placed outside the camp (Deut 23:12-13).

The importance of properly implementing purity laws is illustrated by two passages. In Numbers 5:2-3 the Lord says to Moses:

Command the Israelites to put out of the camp everyone who is leprous, or has a discharge, and everyone who is unclean through contact with a corpse; you shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp; *they must not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.*⁶²

The rationale is that God dwells in the camp with the Israelites and thus the camp must be kept in a perpetual state of sanctification. Purity must be maintained because in his radical holiness Yahweh might destroy those near his presence who are impure. For this reason the Levites were instructed to encamp between the Tabernacle and the rest of the people as a buffer so that "there may be no wrath on the congregation of the Israelites" (Num 1:53).

In Deuteronomy 23:14 the divine presence is again mentioned as reason to maintain purity in the camp. But here a second rationale is given that impinges directly on the well-being of the nation: "Because the LORD your God travels along with your camp, to save you and to hand over your enemies to you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you." In other words, as long as the purity of the camp was properly

⁶⁰ Prescriptive passages: Lev 13:46; 14:3, 8; Num 5:2-4; Deut 23:10-11. Descriptive passages: Lev 10:4-5; Num 12:14-15; Num 31:19-24.

⁶¹ Lev 24:10-23; Num 15:35-36; cf. Lev 10:4-5.

⁶² Quotations from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament follow the NRSV.

maintained, Yahweh would deliver the Israelites from calamity and ensure that they would triumph in battle against their enemies. If the purity of the camp was not maintained, Yahweh's presence would no longer dwell in the midst of Israel and they would be subject to calamity and defeat in battle.

In the post-exilic era it was widely understood that the reason Israel had gone into exile was its failure to obey Torah. Yahweh's defending presence had left his people to let them suffer defeat at the hands of foreign nations. Under Nehemiah and Ezra the people were allowed to return to the land of Israel, but according to the post-exilic prophets, they had failed to fully learn their lesson. The low point came during the Seleucid era when Judaism's very existence was threatened both from external and internal sources. In response, various Jewish groups united to defend the religious customs of the nation.⁶³ Seleucid dominance and persecution was seen as a sign of divine judgement for continued failure to uphold Torah. In the reports of 1 and 2 Maccabees the dutiful observance of religious customs plays a large, perhaps even decisive role in achieving military victory. Victory over the enemy is not attributed primarily to the valor of the combatants, but to God's assistance. Roland Deines observes that the presupposition for this help "was adherence to the Torah, to the extent that this was possible for the combatants" and that the purity laws take on a significance that is unique in the literature of Israel.⁶⁴

The events of the Exile, the Hellenism crisis and the Maccabean revolt were given a theological interpretation which led to a wide-spread belief that both the

⁶³ These include the priestly Hasmonean clan, Hasideans, scribes, and common people who were deeply devoted to their traditional faith.

⁶⁴ Roland Deines, "The Pharisees Between 'Judaisms' and 'Common Judaism,'" in *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (WUNT² 140; vol. 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*; ed. D.A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, Mark A. Seifrid; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 456-57.

safety of the nation and the well-being of individuals depended upon faithful observance of Torah. If Israel was faithful to obey Torah, Yahweh would protect her and grant victory. If she was not, she would suffer foreign domination and calamity. As a result, during the Second Temple period, especially during times of crisis for the nation, questions surrounding food laws, circumcision, annual festivals, priestly lifestyle, the proper administration of Temple sacrifices and ritual purity were accentuated to an unprecedented degree. If blessing and victory could be expected only if the nation faithfully observed Torah, then no effort should be spared in this regard.⁶⁵ And this placed a lot of pressure on the interpreter of the Torah to "get it right." Since the Torah itself emphasized the link between the purity of the camp and the assisting presence of Yahweh, the strict implementation of purity laws was especially important. And this led to a hermeneutical impasse which gave rise to groups like those responsible for the Temple Scroll and MMT.

The purity laws of the Pentateuch are sometimes ambiguous and it is not always obvious that laws found in one book are consistent with similar prescriptions in another. This led to conflicting harmonizations and in turn to conflicting practices. Soon one group's faithful implementation of Torah was viewed by others as defilement of the land. An additional hermeneutical quandary arose from the fact that purity laws were legislated in terms of the tabernacle and the wilderness camp. But in the Second Temple period neither the tabernacle nor the camp existed. The most closely corresponding contemporary realities were the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. While the structures of the tabernacle and the Temple were similar in many respects, they did not fully correspond. There was an even greater degree of

⁶⁵ Deines, "Pharisees," 460.

disparity between the wilderness camp and the city of Jerusalem. There were prescriptions in the Pentateuch that were feasible for the inhabitants of a mobile military camp that were not easily implemented by the residents of a large permanent city. The commandment to place latrines outside the camp, for example, would have been particularly difficult to apply to Jerusalem. Imagine living near the city center and having to run through the streets at 2 a.m. as you try to outrace a case of diarrhea and then persuading the guards to open the gates to let you out! The hermeneutical quandary was to figure out how to fully maintain purity legislations formulated in terms of tabernacle and camp in a world of Temple and Jerusalem. Some took the view that certain accommodations would have to be made, but there was debate about how far those accommodations could go. Others rejected accommodation. For example, the Essenes apparently refused to accommodate the rule about latrines to the urban setting. They lived near a gate in the city wall that would allow them to exit and relieve themselves away from the city (*BJ* 2.148-49; 5.145).⁶⁶

It was obvious that equations would have to be made between tabernacle and Temple, and camp and Jerusalem. But it was not clear whether it was permissible to accommodate the disparities between these institutions or whether the equations had to be absolute. Different parties took different positions, leading to debate and divergence of practice. The accusations became particularly acrimonious because it was not simply the holy land which was (from the perspective of some) being defiled, but the Holy City and the Holy Temple itself. The perceived defilement

⁶⁶ See further Yadin, *Temple Scroll*, 1.301-304. Presumably this gate structure included a small exit that would allow individuals to go out at night if the need arose. Alternatively, it is possible that chamber pots were allowed that would have been emptied away from the city the next morning.

extended to the most sacred of sacred space (cf. *m. Kelim* 1.6-9). Given that the maintenance of proper procedure and purity were imperative to the well-being of the nation and individual, this was a hermeneutical quandary with decidedly existential ramifications.

The Temple Scroll's Solution to the Hermeneutical Quandary

The Temple Scroll represents a radical solution to this hermeneutical quandary. In it the Pentateuchal laws formulated in terms of camp and tabernacle are harmonized and reformulated in terms of Temple and city.⁶⁷ In order to avoid gross anachronism, the Temple and city are presented to Moses as still future realities (11QT 29.1; 45.12). Jerusalem is consistently referred to as the "city of the Temple" (עיר המקדש), not by its name.⁶⁸ Rather than equate institutions, the Temple Scroll simply replaces the institutions that no longer exist with idealized versions of those

⁶⁷ The purification regulations of the scroll sometimes slightly deviate from scripture or introduce non-biblical requirements. On this see Jacob Milgrom, "Deviations from Scripture in the Purity Laws of the Temple Scroll," in *Jewish Civilization in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (ed. Shemaryahu Talmon; JSPSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 159-67.

⁶⁸ This is the view taken by Yadin throughout the *editio princeps* but there has been subsequent debate about whether "city of the Temple" might not refer the Temple Mount (*temenos*) rather than all of Jerusalem. For the case in favor of the Temple mount, see Baruch A. Levine, "The Temple Scroll: Aspects of its Historical Provenance and Literary Character," *BASOR* 232 (1978): 14-17; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Exclusion from the Sanctuary and the City of the Sanctuary in the Temple Scroll," *HAR* 9 (1985): 301-18 (esp. pp. 308, 317-18); idem, "The Theology of the Temple Scroll," *JQR* 85/1-2 (1994): 119. Against this view see Jacob Milgrom, "'Sabbath' and 'Temple City' in the Temple Scroll," *BASOR* 232 (1978): 25-27; idem, "The City of the Temple: A Response to Lawrence H. Schiffman," *JQR* 85/1-2 (1994): 126-28. The chief argument in favor of seeing a reference to the Temple mount rather than the city is that it seems implausible to think that the author of the Temple Scroll could envision a city in which there were no latrines and sex was not permitted (11QT 46.13; 45.11-12; cf. 1QM 7.6-7; CD 12.1-2). Schiffman also believes the dimensions of the scroll's Temple complex support this since they are roughly equivalent to the dimensions of Hasmonean Jerusalem. However, the grammatical and contextual argument is entirely in Milgrom's favor. Decisive in my view is the fact that nowhere in biblical or rabbinic literature are the courts of the Temple called a עיר and Schiffman's view requires an unattested use of the construct. Milgrom is right to insist that "the construct עיר המקדש can only mean: the עיר that contains the המקדש" (Milgrom, "City of the Temple," 126). Sidnie White Crawford has recently argued that the phrase "city of the temple" does indeed refer to the city of Jerusalem as Yadin and Milgrom have maintained. However, the city is no longer envisioned as a normal residential city but as a pilgrimage city in which special measures apply. See "The Meaning of the Phrase עיר המקדש in the Temple Scroll," *DSD* 8/3 (2001): 242-54. Crawford presents an interesting argument but I am not presently convinced.

that do. It is as if God's original revelation to Moses referred to the Temple and Jerusalem all along. This radical reformulation is evidence that debates were in fact taking place about how to apply legislation in terms of tabernacle and camp to realities that did not fully correspond to the prescriptions. The concern that a particular understanding of halakhah be implemented was felt so strongly that the author(s) of the Temple Scroll changed the biblical prescriptions to refer to idealized versions of the realities. This eliminated ambiguity and the need to accommodate disparities between the institutions of legislation and reality. Furthermore, by having God speak to Moses in the first person, the stamp of unmediated divine authority was given to this solution. Interpretive debates could end and the most comprehensive level of purity could be maintained. No longer would the city and Temple be defiled by the application of lax halakhot: "The city which I will sanctify, installing my name and my temple [within it] shall be holy and shall be clean from all types of impurity which could defile it. Everything that there is in it shall be pure and everything that goes into it shall be pure" (11QT 47.3-6). Why? "Because I reside within it" (11QT 47.18). The blessing of Yahweh would be guaranteed. Israel would be victorious in war (11QT 62.6). And if fully successful, the sad Temple of Zerubbabel might be rebuilt in a manner befitting Yahweh's greatness.

Behind the Temple Scroll's fictitious replacement of institutions there is presupposed a particular solution to the hermeneutical quandary: strict equation between institutions. Whatever could not be done in the camp cannot be done anywhere in "the city of the Temple." Whoever had to remain outside the camp must remain outside "the city of the Temple." The following passage illustrates this well:

Anyone who lies with his wife and has an ejaculation, for three days shall not enter anywhere in the city of the temple in which I shall install my name. No blind person shall enter it throughout his whole life; he shall not defile the city in the centre of which I dwell because I, YHWH, dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever and always. Everyone who purifies himself from his gonorrhea shall count off seven days up to his purification. On day seven he shall wash his clothes and immerse his body completely in running water. Afterwards he shall enter the city of the temple. Anyone who is impure through contact with a corpse shall not enter it until he purifies himself. Every leper and infected person shall not enter it until he purifies himself; when he purifies himself and offers the [text ends here]. (11QT 45.11-18 // 11Q20 frags. 13-16, Martínez translation)

This passage restates several laws which are formulated in the Pentateuch with reference to the camp and tabernacle.⁶⁹ Here "the city of the temple" (i.e. Jerusalem) is equivalent to the Pentateuchal camp. A second passage also readily illustrates this equivalency. 11QT 46.13 restates the regulation regarding the location of latrines found in Deuteronomy 23:13-14. In the Temple Scroll it states: "You shall make latrines [lit. "a place for the hand"] for them outside the city, where they are obliged to go." The phrase "outside the city" (חורץ מן העיר) is clearly modeled on the Pentateuchal "outside the camp" (חורץ למחנה). As Yadin states, "This is further proof that in the judgement of the scroll, the Temple city parallels the Pentateuchal מחנה with all its halakhic implications."⁷⁰

Camp and Tabernacle in Josephus' Purification and Sacrificial Laws

Equating the wilderness camp and tabernacle with Jerusalem and the Temple as some level was a necessary interpretive move. The discussion between various parties would not have been about whether to make this move, but about whether

⁶⁹ See Lev 14:3, 8; Num 5:2-4; Deut 23:10-11. Much of this passage draws from Leviticus 15 which does not speak of people actually leaving the camp, only of the length of their impurity. But it is clear from the reference to the tabernacle in v. 31 that the camp is in view.

⁷⁰ Yadin, *Temple Scroll*, 2.199 n. 13.

distinctions could be made that would limit the application of some laws to only certain parts of Jerusalem rather than to the whole city, namely the Temple and the *temenos* (i.e., Temple Mount). For example, could the application of the regulation regarding latrines be accommodated so as to allow places for defecation within the city but not within the *temenos*?

Josephus' descriptions of the purity laws in the *Bellum judaicum* and *Contra Apionem* confirm that the authorities in Jerusalem did equate the city with the wilderness camp at some level. Lepers and those with gonorrhea were not allowed to enter the city (*B.J.* 5.227; cf. Lev 13:46; Num 5:1). This equates the *camp* in the relevant biblical regulations with Jerusalem. In the same passage, however, Josephus says that men and priests who were not thoroughly pure (in the process of purification? seminal emission?) were barred only from the inner court of the Temple. Likewise, menstruating women were prohibited only from entering the Temple complex (*B.J.* 5.227; *Apion.*, 2.103), presumably because biblical legislation bars them from the sanctuary and touching anything holy (Lev 12:4) but does not expressly send them out of the camp. But these last two examples would have been viewed as defilement of the camp by those who accepted the stricter regulations of the Temple Scroll.⁷¹

⁷¹ Josephus' descriptions are compared with the Temple Scroll in Silvia Castelli, "Josephus' *Halakhah* and the Temple Scroll: Questions of Sources and Exegetic Traditions in the Laws on Purity," *Henoch* 24 (2002): 331-41. The halakhah Josephus describes also differ at points from the Mishnah. See Richard Bauckham, "Josephus' Account of the Temple in *Contra Apionem* 1.102-109," in *Josephus' Contra Apionem* (ed. Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 327-47.

In the *Antiquities* Josephus is generally consistent in referring to the camp and tabernacle while recounting the events of the Pentateuch.⁷² But this changes when he begins a section (3.224ff.) explaining the regulations pertaining to sacrifice and purification. In this section he anachronistically reformulates the regulations in terms of city and Temple. For example, describing the Day of Atonement ritual he writes:⁷³

In addition to these, they bring two goats, of which one is sent alive into the wilderness beyond the boundaries, in order to be an aversion and pardon for the sins of all the multitude; and they lead the other into the suburbs into the purest spot, and there they burn it, skin and all, without cleaning it at all. (A.J. 3.241)⁷⁴

In Leviticus the scapegoat is taken into the "wilderness" and the communal goat is taken "outside the camp" (Lev. 16:10, 27). Unlike Leviticus, Josephus juxtaposes what is done with the two goats. He makes their destinations parallel by adding "beyond the boundaries" and substituting "suburbs" (i.e. outside the city walls) in place of "outside the camp." Though recounting the biblical laws as part of his retelling of the Pentateuch, he has described the ceremony with Jerusalem in view.

Turning to the purity regulations, Josephus says that Moses "expelled from the city both those whose bodies were attacked by leprosy and those with spermatorrhoea" (A.J. 3.261). Similarly, he says Moses "banished lepers completely from the city—associating with no one and in no way differing from a corpse" (A.J.

⁷² Josephus sometimes represents מִחֻמָּה with παρεμβολή but more frequently with the synonym στρατόπεδον. He occasionally refers to the sanctuary of the tabernacle as the ναός. In later passages the Temple is referred to as the ἱερόν.

⁷³ The following translations are from Louis H. Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4: Translation and Commentary* (vol. 3 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*; ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁷⁴ Niese's Greek text says that the first goat is sent εἰς τὴν ὑπερόριον ἐρημίαν, which Whiston inexplicably renders "out of the limits of the camp," and the second ἐν τοῖς προαστείοις εἰς καθάρωτατον, which he renders "a place of great cleanness within the limits of the camp." It is not clear whether Whiston conformed his translation to the biblical text or whether he depended on a manuscript that did. There is no doubt that Jerusalem is in view; προάστειον is used elsewhere to refer to the suburbs of the city outside the walls (B.J. 5.264; 6.7).

3.264). In his commentary on these passages Feldman says that Josephus has made a significant change to the law: "Josephus has Moses banish lepers not merely from the camp, as Lev. 13:46 and 14:3 have it, but also from the city."⁷⁵ This is incorrect.

Josephus has not expanded the application of the law beyond the camp to the entire city; he identifies the entire city with the camp of the regulation.

One might think that exclusion from "the city" is intended to be exclusion from any Jewish city or society in general. The exclusion does, of course, entail exclusion from society and some of these laws were supposed to be applied to cities throughout the land of Israel. But throughout this section Josephus equates the biblical camp with Jerusalem specifically. Consider his description of the festival of Tabernacles (Sukkot):

and whenever they have come upon the lands of their fathers, arriving at that city that because of the Temple they will have as a metropolis, they should celebrate a festival for eight days and at that time offer whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, bearing in their hands a bouquet made up of myrtle and willow-branch together with a branch of palm, with the fruit of the persea being present. (A.J. 3.245; cf. 3.269)

Likewise, in this section of the *Antiquities* we also find Josephus referring to the Temple in his description of laws which in their biblical context refer to the tabernacle. Moses, he says, "has forbidden women, when they have given birth, from entering the Temple (τὸ ἱερόν) and from touching sacrifices until after forty days if the child is a male; and it happens that twice the number of days is required for female births" (A.J. 3.269; cf. Lev 12:4). If a man suspects his wife of adultery, then "one of the priests stations her at the gates which are turned toward the Temple (τὸν νεών)" and performs a ceremony to determine whether she has in fact been

⁷⁵ Feldman, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, 308 n. 778.

unfaithful (A.J. 3.270). While the use of ναός in the second regulation on its own could refer to the sanctuary of the tabernacle, the use of ἱερόν in the immediately previous regulation and the mention of gates makes it clear that Josephus is anachronistically referring to the Temple.⁷⁶ But after this section on the purity laws and sacrifice Josephus returns to using the terminology of camp and tabernacle in his retelling of the Pentateuch's narrative. It is striking that the only biblical references to the camp and tabernacle treated in this anachronistic manner are those found in the context of sacrifice and purity. It is as if the moment the discussion turns to halakhic matters Josephus unthinkingly translates references to the tabernacle and camp as references to the Temple and Jerusalem with no regard to the anachronism of doing so. This seems to be a deeply ingrained habit. How would Josephus have understood Hebrews' call to go "outside the camp"? It appears that he would have instinctively read it as a call to leave Jerusalem.

The Concerns of 4QMMT and Its Definitions

With the long-awaited publication of 4QMMT, scholars were given access to important new evidence for the debates which gave rise to the competing factions within Second Temple Jewish society. This is true whether one accepts the predominant view that MMT is an actual letter sent to the Jerusalem leadership or, alternatively, sees MMT as an intra-communal treatise or a fictitious historicizing letter composed for intra-communal instruction.⁷⁷ In either case MMT informs us

⁷⁶ The biblical regulation does not mention placing the woman near the gates. The Mishnah also attests this extra-biblical element of the ritual. The suspected adulteress is to be taken "up to the Eastern Gate which is over against the entrance of the Nicanor Gate" (*m. Sotah* 1:5).

⁷⁷ On the alternatives to the predominant view, see Steven D. Fraade, "To Whom It May Concern: 4QMMT and Its Addressee(s)," *RevQ* 19/4 (2000): 507-26 and Maxine L. Grossman, "Reading 4QMMT:

about important halakhic issues on which its author(s) and those who used the document took views divergent from the positions implemented by the Jerusalem authorities. MMT is primary evidence for the debates which at least one Second Temple group engaged in with at least one other group. The fact that MMT was copied over several generations, the youngest copy being dated on paleographical grounds to 50 C.E.,⁷⁸ indicates that the debated issues mentioned in MMT were still live issues shortly before the Temple's destruction.

Twice in the extant text it is stated that the priests should take particular care to ensure that the people follow the prescribed practices "so as not to cause the people to bear punishment" (B 12-13; B 26-27a).⁷⁹ The entirety of section C elaborates on these sentiments and makes reference to the Pentateuch's promises of blessing to those who obey the Law and cursing to those who do not. In the view of MMT, some of these curses had already been fulfilled. Citing the example of Israel's kings, MMT exhorts the addressee to secure a blessing for the nation by diligently following the community's interpretation of the Law:

Think of the kings of Israel and contemplate their deeds: whoever among them feared [the To]rah was delivered from troubles; and these were the seekers of the Torah whose transgressions were [for]given. Think of David who was a man of righteous deeds and who was (therefore) delivered from many troubles and was forgiven. We have (indeed) sent you some of the precepts of the Torah according to our decision, for your welfare and the welfare of your people. (C 23-27)

The prescriptions of MMT address a number of issues. Section A, which may or may not have been original to the composition, focuses on the calendar and the

Genre and History," *RevQ* 20/1 (2001): 3-22. Fraade argues extensively for the third view. Grossman finds both alternatives "significantly more convincing" than the predominant view (p. 22 n. 60).

⁷⁸ Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD* X, 109.

⁷⁹ Quotations of MMT are from the translated composite text in Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD* X.

proper timing of festivals and Sabbaths. Section B, the heart of the document, concerns itself with things such as the acceptability of Gentile sacrifices, the time limits which the people have to consume their shared sacrifices, preventing lepers from coming into contact with pure foods until their purification rites are completed, regulations about where certain sacrificial animals should be slaughtered or where their ashes should be deposited, which animal hides should not be allowed into Jerusalem, why dogs should not be allowed into the city, which classes of people should not be allowed into the city, why the deaf and blind should not be allowed to have access to the sacred food, and marriage regulations for the priests.

MMT confirms that there was a hermeneutical debate in the Second Temple era concerned with the application of the biblical tabernacle and camp laws to contemporary realities. The halakhot of MMT and the Temple Scroll overlap to a significant degree.⁸⁰ The subtle polemics of the Temple Scroll and the less subtle polemics of MMT are both directed at what their authors considered the improper implementation of biblical laws governing purity and sacrifice in Jerusalem. Both agree that Jerusalem and the Temple are to be strictly equated with the camp and tabernacle. Interestingly, though, they employ quite different strategies to solve the hermeneutical quandary the application of these laws created. Whereas the Temple Scroll updates them to refer to the Temple and "city of the Temple," MMT retains the biblical terminology and insists upon the identification of institutions. In MMT this becomes explicit when the author goes so far as to define what the members of his community understand by *tabernacle* and *camp*.

⁸⁰ See Schiffman, "*Miqṣat Ma'āseḥ ha-Torah* and the Temple Scroll."

And we are of the opinion that the sanctuary [is the 'tent of meeting'] and that Jerusalem is the 'camp', and that 'outside the camp' [is outside Jerusalem], that is, the encampment of their settlements. It is 'outside the c[amp]' where one should ... the purification-offering and] take out the ashes of [the] altar and bu[rn the purification-offering. For Jerusalem] is the place which [He has chosen] from among all the tribes [of Israel] (B 29-33)⁸¹

One might assume that this principle simply indicates the community's way of reading and applying scripture. But the equation of institutions in MMT is a two-way street. In the formulation of extra-biblical halakhot, the Pentateuchal terminology is freely employed when contemporary realities are clearly in view. This demonstrates an interchangeability of terminology. For example, MMT gives the following regulation and rationale:

And one must not let dogs enter the holy camp, since they may eat some of the bones of the sanctuary while the flesh is (still) on them. For Jerusalem is the camp of holiness, and is the place which He has chosen from among all the tribes of Israel. For Jerusalem is the capital of the camps of Israel. (B 58-62)

As formulated, the rule about dogs employs both biblical and later terminology. When the rule states that dogs are not allowed into "the holy camp," this is biblicizing language. When it gives the rationale, "since they may eat some of the bones of the sanctuary," it uses the common Qumran term for the Temple (מקדש). To ensure that readers do not fail to realize that when MMT's community mentions "the camp" they are referring to Jerusalem, the author explicitly states that "Jerusalem is the camp of holiness" and "Jerusalem is the capital of the camps of Israel."

At this point MMT is not just clarifying its community's use of biblical terminology in reference to contemporary realities. The polemical point is also being made that the whole of Jerusalem is the camp. Just as the Temple Scroll does for the

⁸¹ Though portions of this passage are reconstructed, I know of no scholar who questions the reconstructions in the first two lines.

"city of the Temple," MMT prohibits from entry into any part of Jerusalem all that is prohibited from entering the wilderness camp. All those who in the Pentateuch's prescriptions would have to go outside the camp because of contracting an impurity must go outside Jerusalem. Those aspects of the various sacrificial rites which scripture prescribes be done outside the camp are to be done outside the limits of Jerusalem. All of this seems to contrast with an accommodating practice that allowed certain things to enter or occur in Jerusalem which were prohibited from the wilderness camp. MMT sees these allowances as defiling the holy camp in which Yahweh dwells. How would Hebrews 13:13 have been understood by the author(s) of 4QMMT or those who used it? For them Jerusalem is, by definition, "the camp of holiness." We can safely presume that they would have seen a straightforward call to leave Jerusalem.

Camp Terminology in other Dead Sea Scrolls

Camp terminology also appears in the Damascus Document, the War Scroll, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and scattered in a few other Qumran texts. In these documents it is not used primarily to refer to Jerusalem as it does in 4QMMT. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the camp terminology of the full Qumran corpus. However, a few brief comments should be made about how its usage in some of the other documents relates to that in 4QMMT and how this might contribute to our understanding of its usage in Hebrews.⁸²

⁸² For discussion of the phrase "camps of the gods" in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, see James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (ECDSS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 108. This usage, inspired by the "camp of God" in Genesis 32:3, is not pertinent to the discussion here.

In the War Scroll מחנה is frequently used to refer to the military camps of the sons of light and also to the "camps of the Kittim" (מחני כתיים) (1QM 16.3; cf. 18.4). This is the common, non-technical use of the word. However, the purity rules for the camp of the sons of light are much the same as those for Jerusalem (1QM 7.4-8). The biblical basis for this is Deuteronomy 23:9-14. Many modern translations separate the injunction regarding encampment for battle in verse 9 from the purity regulations for the camp in verses 10-14. Of course, in the wilderness setting there is only one camp; sometimes it is on a war footing. But when applied to subsequent situations, verses 10-14 could be understood as either general rules for the camp (i.e. Jerusalem) or as having particular reference to a war camp, explaining what it means to "guard against any impropriety" (23:9) in it. The reason why purity must be maintained is that "the Lord your God travels along with your camp, to save you and to hand over your enemies to you, therefore your camp must be holy" (23:14). A camp of war must maintain the same level of purity as *the* camp because the Lord is present in both. The camps of war are effectively extensions of *the* camp. In the War Scroll the stricter purity regulations of the camp are applied to war camps because the holy angels are present in the midst of the warriors (1QM 1.6) and God is in their midst to destroy their enemies (1QM 10.1-2). If one were to reason backward from the logic of the War Scroll, one would conclude that Jerusalem is the camp *par excellence* because in it is the sanctuary of the divine presence. The War Scroll's use of camp terminology confirms, albeit subtly, that *the* camp is the city of the Temple, Jerusalem.

In the Damascus Document settlements are referred to as camps along with cities and the *yahad*. Precedent for referring to communities of Israelites as "camps" comes from Numbers 2:17, 32. At one time the camps in CD were thought to indicate that some of the covenanters literally lived in camps analogous to Israel in the wilderness. This was fostered in part because different halakhah are listed for cities and camps.⁸³ But the distinction is not between cities and actual camps but between cities without walls and walled cities. Recall that in 4QMMT Jerusalem is "the head of the camps of Israel" (B 61-62). In the context of MMT the "camps of Israel" are the major cities of Israel. Though not stated, it can be assumed that these are the walled cities. In the Mishnah Jerusalem and the other ancient walled cities fall in the same broad category (cf. *m. 'Arak*. 9.6). Walled cities have a higher degree of sanctity than do cities without walls and villages, thus stricter purity regulations apply to them. As a slightly later text says, "Cities surrounded by a wall are more holy than the Land of Israel. For they send forth lepers from their midst" (*t. B. Qam*. 1:14).⁸⁴ Jerusalem has more sanctity than other walled cities and thus more stringent regulations apply (*m. Kelim* 1:7; *m. Meg*. 1:1-2). A similar view (if not the same view) that assigned degrees of holiness to different kinds of places seems to have been current during the Second Temple period.⁸⁵ The camps in CD and MMT are the same, the walled cities of Israel. Jerusalem is the head of the camps with the highest degree of sanctity; it is *the camp*. When CD refers to camps it does not refer to isolated settlements comprised exclusively of sectarians but to the walled cities and the parts of those

⁸³ See Arie Rubenstein, "Urban Halakhah and Camp Rules in the 'Cairo Fragments of a Damascene Covenant,'" *Sefarad* 12 (1952): 283-96.

⁸⁴ Translation from Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta: Sixth Division: Tohorot* (New York: Ktav, 1977), 4-5.

⁸⁵ Cf. Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 145.

cities inhabited by the covenanters.⁸⁶ This is confirmed by the Sabbath regulations in CD 10.14-23. On the Sabbath no one is to walk more than a thousand cubits "outside his city" (חֹץ לַעִיר) (10.21) while the only water to be consumed is that which is "in the camp" (בַּמַּחֲנֶה) (10.23). The camp is clearly a city. The fact that the beginning of the Sabbath is determined by the height of the sun's disc in relation to the city gate (10.15-16) suggests that it is a walled city.

In the context of discussing purity regulations the walled cities are referred to as camps because this is their proper halakhic designation. There is a hierarchy of sanctity governing places within the land of Israel. At the top is "the camp" (Jerusalem) followed by "the camps" (the walled cities), the cities without walls, the villages and the sparsely populated areas. The walled cities are "camps" because the halakhic regulations that apply to them in the Pentateuch are formulated with camp terminology. In other words, the walled cities are designated camps during the Second Temple period for the same reason that Jerusalem is *the* camp.

A question that remains is what the relationship was between *the* camp and the *yahad* in CD. On the basis of MMT, Stegemann understands the camp to be the head community of the Essene movement in Jerusalem, as if camp terminology were sectarian.⁸⁷ But the nature of MMT's polemic testifies that it was not. As the forgoing discussion of the hermeneutical quandary illustrates, this terminology was necessarily common property that all groups had to grapple with. Elisha Qimron is closer to the mark when he states: "The 'camp' was Jerusalem, and its temporal

⁸⁶ This is a straightforward solution to the "terminological puzzle" to which Hartmut Stegemann refers in his discussion of camp terminology. See his "The Qumran Essenes—Local Members of the Main Jewish Union in Late Second Temple Times," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress* (ed. Julio Trebolle Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner; 2 vols.; STDJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1.136.

⁸⁷ Stegemann, "Qumran Essenes," 135.

substitute was the dwelling place of the *yahad*, wherever it may be." He goes on to plausibly speculate that "If this interpretation is correct, the *yahad* is distinct from the whole sect; it consists of only those members who kept the purity laws which were to be kept in Jerusalem ('the camp')." ⁸⁸ McCarter makes a comment that suggests a corollary to this: "the camp represented the sacred center of Israel, which was supposed to be Jerusalem and would eventually return to Jerusalem, but which during the present world age was exiled in the wilderness." ⁸⁹

Finally, long before the publication of either the Temple Scroll or 4QMMT Fensham compared the use of camp terminology in the New Testament and the published Scrolls (with particular focus on the War Scroll). His analysis brought him tantalizingly close to the correct interpretation of Hebrews 13:13. He concluded that the use of *camp* in Hebrews 13:11-13 was analogous to that of Qumran literature in which the camp "is regarded as the old sanctuary, a relic of the old order which should be disregarded for the new, the sacrifice of Christ outside the παρεμβολή." He then suggested that "it is also possible that παρεμβολή refers here to the old Jerusalem which stands in *Hebrews* in contrast to the new Jerusalem. The abandoning of the old Jerusalem is analogous to a similar concept at Qumrân, where the sect has left Jerusalem to go to Damascus and formed a new holy community." ⁹⁰ But, for reasons which are not explained, Fensham did not allow the analogy to extend to a physical departure. He instead equated the abandonment of the camp in Hebrews simply with bearing the stigma of Christ. One has to wonder if the reason for this

⁸⁸ Elisha Qimron, "Davies' *The Damascus Covenant*," *JQR* 77/1 (1986): 87.

⁸⁹ P. Kyle McCarter, "Geography in the Documents," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 308.

⁹⁰ F.C. Fensham, "'Camp' in the New Testament and Milhamah," *RevQ* 4/4 (1964): 561.

was reticence to disagree with the consensus that Hebrews was not written to a community in Palestine. If he would have had access to 4QMMT it is likely that he would have allowed the analogy to extend all the way.

The Camp in Rabbinic Literature

As might be expected, rabbinic literature preserves a solution to the hermeneutical quandary created when biblical laws formulated in terms of camp and tabernacle were applied in a world of Jerusalem and the Temple. The rabbinic solution was to distinguish between three camps and assign the application of individuals laws to particular camps. The biblical basis for the three camp system was the concentric arrangement of the camp in Numbers 2. At the center of the camp was the tabernacle in which the divine presence dwelt. Surrounding it was the camp of the Levites (Num 2:17). The twelve tribal camps were arranged surrounding the camp of the Levites with three on each side. The rabbinic view replicates the three camps within Jerusalem. In the Babylonian Talmud we read:

Were there no camps in the wilderness? Surely it was taught: Just as there were camps in the wilderness, so there was a camp in Jerusalem. From [the walls of] Jerusalem to the Temple Mount was the camp of the Israelites; from the Temple Mount to the Gate of Nicanor was the Levitical camp; beyond that was the camp of the *Shechinah*. (*b. Zebah*. 116b)⁹¹

A parallel statement is found in the Tosefta:

And just as in the wilderness were three camps, the camp of the Indwelling Presence of God, the camp of the Levites, and the camp of the Israelites, so there were in Jerusalem [three camps]: From the gate of Jerusalem to the gate of the Temple Mount is the camp of Israel. From the gate of the Temple

⁹¹ In an earlier portion of this tractate "outside the camp" in Leviticus 16:27 is taken as the equivalent to "outside Jerusalem on the east." On this basis Hanson wrote: "It is interesting to observe that there is evidence in the Talmud for the equation of the phrases 'outside the camp' and 'outside Jerusalem'" ("Reproach of the Messiah," 239). He seems, however, to have been unaware of the more significant statement here and went on to assert that in its context the phrase in Hebrews 13:13 was more likely to signify "outside Judaism." He does not indicate what in the context allegedly supports this.

Mount up to Nicanor's gate is the camp of the Levites. From the Nicanor's gate and inward is the camp of the Indwelling Presence of God. (*t. B. Qam.* 1:12)

Significant for our purposes is the fact that "there was a camp in Jerusalem" comprised of the three camps. In this system *camp* always refers to Jerusalem, the Temple Mount or the inner court of the Temple. By subdividing Jerusalem in this way the biblical purity laws could be accommodated to the urban setting. Numbers 5:2 prescribes that lepers, those with a discharge and those with corpse impurity were to be excluded from the camp. Even though lepers were excluded from the city, according to rabbinic interpretation those with corpse impurity were barred only from the camp of the Presence (*b. Pesah.* 67a; *b. Naz.* 45a). But when Leviticus 24:14 commands that the blasphemer be stoned "outside the camp" this means "outside the three encampments" (*t. Sanh.* 42b); i.e. outside Jerusalem completely. This regulation undoubtedly accounts for why capital punishment was executed outside the city walls during the first century (cf. Acts 7:58; Heb 13:12). Even more relevant to Hebrews are the regulations for sin offerings. Leviticus 4:12 prescribes that the ashes from a priest's sin offering be carried "to a clean place outside the camp." A bull was also to be slaughtered as a sin offering for the people at the "tent of meeting" but not burned. A priest was to "carry the bull outside the camp, and burn it... it is the sin offering for the assembly" (Lev 4:21). For these regulations the rabbis interpreted "outside the camp" to mean "outside the three camps" (*t. Sanh.* 42b), i.e. outside Jerusalem completely. These are, of course, passages from which Hebrews 13:11-13 directly derives its terminology. How would somebody who held to the rabbinic three camp system have understood Hebrews 13:13? Once again, it would be viewed as a call to leave Jerusalem.

Even though these rabbinic texts were compiled much later, the three camp system seems to have been operative at the end of the Second Temple period.⁹² It is not entirely clear whether the authors of the Temple Scroll and MMT objected to the three camp system *per se* or only to the judgements made about which laws applied to which camp. In either case, impure persons, animal skins, bones, etc. were allowed into Jerusalem which the authors of these scrolls believed should be banned completely. They were convinced that the authorities were allowing the city and Temple to be defiled due to the way in which camp legislation was implemented. In conjunction with ritual purity, another major area of concern in these scrolls is the regulation of sacrifices—who may offer them, who may touch them, what defiles them, how they should be prepared and the time limits on their consumption. The authors of the Temple Scroll and MMT object to a perceived carelessness of the Jerusalem authorities in these matters. The rabbinic literature testifies to laxity in precisely this area. Sussmann summarizes this point well:

The Mishna in *Hagiga* (2:6-7) discusses 'degrees of ritual purity' (*ma'alot tohorah*)—for ordinary food, heave-offering (*terumah*), sacrificial food, and the red-heifer (and everything associated with it). Yet, paradoxically, it was in Jerusalem and the temple, of all places, that the rabbis were particularly lenient regarding purity laws, especially during the holidays, to the extent that they ruled that even the masses (*'ammei ha-'arez*) 'are trusted in Jerusalem regarding sacred food, and during the festival, with regard to the heave-offering as well' (*m. Hag.* 3:6). The rabbis relied on the masses' scrupulous purification in preparation for the festivals and the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁹³

⁹² Schiffman ("Exclusion from the Sanctuary") takes the view that the Temple Scroll assumes the three camp system but locates the three camps within the *temenos* rather than the whole of Jerusalem. The alternative interpretation sees the Temple Scroll (and MMT) rejecting the three camp system.

⁹³ Ya'akov Sussman, "The History of the Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Preliminary Talmudic Observations on *Miqsat Ma'aseh ha-Torah* (4QMMT)," in Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD* X, 198.

Except for the well-to-do, it was rare for Jews to offer sacrifices they could consume except during the festivals.⁹⁴ So leniency at this particular time greatly increased the chances of sacrificial foods being defiled. It is in the context of objecting to leniency related to sacrifice that the author(s) of MMT defined what they meant by *camp*: "one must not let dogs enter the holy camp, since they may eat some of the bones of the sanctuary while the flesh is (still) on them. For Jerusalem is the camp of holiness..." (B 58-60).⁹⁵ This is one of the things that they believe will "cause the people to bear punishment" (B 12-13; B 26-27a) if it is not corrected.

Conclusion

If Hebrews is the riddle of the New Testament, its last chapter is both its key and the riddle of the riddle. At the center of this riddle is the summative exhortation to go outside the camp. During the Second Temple period biblical texts which mention "the camp" were read as if they referred to Jerusalem. The Temple Scroll and Josephus both present the biblical laws of purity and sacrifice as if they were originally formulated to refer to the city. MMT instead defines what its author(s) mean by *tabernacle*, *camp* and *outside the camp*. In the context of the halakhic discussion represented by MMT these are legal terms of art with precise definitions. There was disagreement about those definitions and therefore about how to apply the laws that are formulated using these terms. However, the nature of the disagreement limited the options to Jerusalem, the Temple Mount or the inner court

⁹⁴ Cf. E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63BCE - 66CE* (London: SCM and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 129.

⁹⁵ The Pentateuch does not prohibit dogs from the camp but MMT is convinced that the sanctity of the sacrifices is defiled by their presence. The Tosefta, interestingly, indicates that even a High Priest had a dog (t. B. Qam. 1:6). See further Qimron and Strugnell, *DJD X*, 162-64.

of the Temple. In other words, "the camp" is always Jerusalem or something within it. But in the application of many laws even the rabbinic three camp system understood "the camp" to be equivalent to "Jerusalem" and "outside the camp" equivalent to "outside Jerusalem." These include the very laws from which Hebrews 13:11-13 derives its terminology.

These findings are very significant for the interpretation of Hebrews. It can no longer be maintained that the author's consistent reference to the tabernacle rather than the Temple is due to a bookish indifference to contemporary realities. To the contrary, the author has chosen terminology appropriate for a discussion dominated by issues related to priesthood, purity and sacrifice. Nor can it be denied that the call to "go to him outside the camp" is a call to leave Jerusalem. There is nothing ambiguous or cryptic about Hebrews 13:13 when it is read against the backdrop of how camp terminology was widely used and understood in the Second Temple period. Because *the camp* and *outside the camp* are legal terms of art in halakhic contexts discussing sacrifice and purity, they do not permit purely symbolic or metaphorical meanings. Hebrews 13:13 must be understood as an explicit call to "go outside Jerusalem," i.e., physically leave the city. Why must the readers leave the city? Because "here we do not have an enduring city but instead we eagerly seek the one that is coming." This entails that the recipients of the epistle were located in Jerusalem prior to its destruction. An important part of the riddle of Hebrews is now solved.

Chapter Nine

The Readers' Situation

Introduction

Hebrews was sent to a group of Christ-followers in Jerusalem. It urges them to listen to a prophetic warning to leave the city before it is destroyed. They are urged to imitate, in a concrete way, Israel's exemplars of faith. Establishing these points represents an important advance in our understanding of the epistle. But it is only a starting point. This thesis has consisted of a ground-clearing exercise and prolegomena for the reexamination of the epistle as a whole. Its findings open numerous avenues for further investigation and raise many questions that cannot be addressed here. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly address, in part, three of the more important issues that arise. First, why were the readers hesitant to obey the oracle? Second, how does the epistle's argumentation in chs. 1-10 relate to the call to leave Jerusalem? Third, can we situate the state of affairs addressed by the epistle in the known history of Judaism and the Christ-movement in Palestine? Because their answers are intertwined, the first two questions will be addressed together.

The Reader's Main Concerns & the Epistle's Argumentation

Why were the recipients of the epistle reticent to obey the word of exhortation and leave Jerusalem and the Temple behind? The answer is simple: they were

devout, Christ-following Jews and the Torah commands sacrifice by Levitical priests at "the place" God chose for his habitation (Deut 12:5-7). To abandon the holy city and its Temple was highly counter-intuitive and appeared to run contrary to divinely inspired Scripture. If confessing that Jesus is Israel's Messiah now entails that clear scriptural injunctions must be disregarded because of an alleged word from heaven, then this confession must be abandoned. After all, the Law was given to Moses on Sinai by the mediation of angels. Some within the community had already abandoned the Christ-confession, but the addressees were not prepared to do that—yet. Their experiences as Christ-followers and the convictions they had developed about Jesus also made disobedience to the oracle seem counter-intuitive and contrary to the will of God. For the first time their fundamental intuitions as Jews and their identity as Christ-followers were in serious conflict. Hebrews' main arguments do not focus on the call to leave Jerusalem but instead address issues underlying the readers' concerns about doing so.

Faithful Jews

The recipients want to be faithful Jews who are true to the Law and Prophets and loyal followers of Jesus. The author does not force his readers to choose between these identities. To the contrary, he seeks to show that the person who truly understands Scripture and who recognizes the full significance of Jesus' death can obey the word of exhortation without forsaking either identity. In fact, he argues, the *only* way they can be faithful Jews is to follow Jesus outside the camp.

The author finds in the history of Israel two prototypical Jewish identities that he presents to his audience as "possible selves." The first is exemplified by those who

hear the word of God but do not faithfully respond with obedience (4:2, 6). Israel's wilderness generation and Esau typify the identity of the disobedient Jew. These negative exemplars renounce the inheritance they have been promised and die in the desert; they have no opportunity to repent and regain what they have forsaken (3:16-19; 12:16-17). The second identity is exemplified by those who hear and faithfully obey the word of God. The identity of the faithful Jew is typified by the men and women listed in the catalog of heroes (ch. 11). They do such things as offer the sacrifices God wants (11:4), heed warnings from heaven (11:7) obey when they are called to go out from their land (11:8), leave Egypt unafraid of the consequences (11:27), and abandon their city (11:31). They do not think about the land they have left behind but instead look forward to the heavenly country and the city God has prepared for them (11:10, 15-16). They receive the promises and are saved from destruction (6:12; 9:15; 10:39; 11:39-40). Those who do not respond in faith can look forward to the same kind of fate as the disobedient who fell in the desert, as those who suffered the plagues in Egypt and as the inhabitants of Jericho.

The faithful Jew, according to our author, is the person who hears and obeys the one speaking from heaven and imitates the actions of Israel's exemplars of faith (3:14; 6:12; 12:1, 25). The faithful Jew will be the Christ-follower who follows in the footsteps of exemplars like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Rahab. Those who do not will prove themselves disobedient to the climactic word spoken through the Son and will receive a punishment far worse than was ever imposed for disobedience to the Law (1:1-2; 2:2; 10:28-31). The author reaffirms the fundamental intuitions of his audience: as Jews they are obligated to remain true to the Law and Prophets; as Christ-followers they are obligated to remain true to Jesus. But their understanding

of Scripture is deficient because they have failed to appreciate the implications of what it means to say that the new covenant it promised has now been established.

The audience is reticent to obey the word of exhortation because doing so entails the abandonment of institutions central to Jewish identity and piety. These are institutions, moreover, which under the old covenant were necessary for purification and the forgiveness of sin. What the readers have failed to appreciate is that with the coming of the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and his sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary, the earthly sanctuary and its cultus have reached their foreordained *telos*. As institutions of the covenant that has been replaced, they no longer serve a role in God's covenant relationship with his people and will therefore soon be removed. Furthermore, their perpetual sacrifices and ablutions were never able to accomplish all that the High Priest of the new covenant accomplished by his one sacrifice. Identity as part of the people of God is no longer tied to the Jerusalem Temple and Levitical cultus; it is now associated with the mediator of the new covenant and his priestly ministry. And he is found outside the camp. Now that a warning from heaven has been received, the Jew who is truly faithful to the Law and Prophets will also be found outside the camp.

Sacrifices that Will Please God

Among the earliest confessional statements of the Christ-movement was "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). It is often assumed that anyone who made this confession would have believed that the sacrifices of the Temple were inappropriate, or at least superfluous. This does not follow. Sacrifice was offered for numerous reasons that had nothing to do with the forgiveness of sin.

Merely affirming that Christ died for sins would not have readily led a Jew to believe that participation in the Temple cultus was no longer necessary. To the contrary, most Jewish Christ-followers would have naturally assumed that *of course* they should continue offering sacrifice.¹ After all, it is written. Furthermore, neither does it follow that Jewish Christ-followers would infer that sin offerings are no longer needed just because they confess a sacrificial and expiatory understanding of Christ's death. If the death of Jesus was understood to be analogous to a new Passover (e.g., 1 Cor 5:7) in which the principalities, powers and sin that enslaved God's people were defeated (e.g., Col 2:13-15), then one might reasonably think that sin offerings would still be needed to expiate post-baptismal sin. It would have been natural for Christ-followers in Palestine to continue offering all the sacrifices prescribed in the Torah. What would have been highly counterintuitive is the idea that the Levitical cultus could be willingly left behind as unnecessary. There is reason to believe that one of the primary reasons that the recipients of Hebrews hesitated to leave Jerusalem was the belief that sacrifice was required if they were to please God.

In Chapter Eight it was observed that words related to εὐάρεστος in 12:28, 13:16 and 13:21 mark 12:28-13:21 as a distinct unit that functions as a peroration. It was also noted that the main concerns of the peroration must be taken as main concerns of the argument of the entire epistle. The call to go outside the camp (13:13) lies at the rhetorical center of this passage but it is not its main theme. The overarching theme and the element that links it most directly with the main

¹ Whether Gentile Christ-followers should also offer sacrifice is another matter entirely. It is likely that there would have been some debate about whether Gentile believers should participate in the cultus, just as there was about circumcision. But unlike circumcision, this was not an issue of much practical concern since the overwhelming majority of Gentile believers lived so far from the Temple that it was a moot point.

argument of the epistle is sacrifice. Unfortunately, this is somewhat obscured by English translations.

Hebrews 12:28 states: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we should acceptably render [cultic] service to God (λατρεύωμεν εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ) with reverence and awe." In 13:15-16 the addressees are instructed to "offer a sacrifice of praise" and do good and share because "by such sacrifices God is pleased (τοιαύταις γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ θεός)." In 13:21 the exhortation to offer to God pleasing service and sacrifice is reciprocated: "[May the God of peace] make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight (τὸ εὐάρεστον ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ)." If the readers offer service and sacrifice that please God, God will work in them that which is pleasing in his sight. This benediction in turn hearkens back to a significant statement earlier in the epistle. Enoch is commended because he pleased God. A general principle is deduced from Enoch's commendation: "And apart from faith it is impossible to please [God] (ἀδύνατον εὐαρεστῆσαι)" (11:6). This general statement about pleasing God anticipates the statements in 12:28 and 13:15-16. The specific area in which the readers are called to please God is in cultic worship and sacrifice (note, too, that the general statement follow close on the heels of Abel's commendation).

The NRSV translates 12:28 somewhat differently than I have: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship." This and similar translations mask the concrete cultic imagery of the statement. By inserting the noun *worship* as the object of *offer* and changing the adverb *pleasing/acceptable* into an adjective modifying *worship*, this

translation removes the cultic imagery from the exhortation. However, elsewhere in Hebrews λατρεύω and λατρεία are used to describe cultic service and sacrifice in the sanctuary (8:5; 9:1, 6; 10:2; 13:10). The author is not saying that his readers should offer God "acceptable worship" in the sense that modern church-goers might think. What is in view is the kind of worship that occurred in the tabernacle and Temple—particularly the offering of gifts and sacrifices on the altar by the priests (cf. 5:1; 8:3-4; 9:9). He is telling his readers that they should render to God the kinds of gifts and sacrifices that will please him, implicitly contrasted with the offering of gifts and sacrifices that do not please him. This is a restatement of the earlier contrast between the various forms of cultic service performed under the old covenant that cannot perfect the worshipper (9:9-10) and the fact that the blood of Jesus purifies the conscience from dead works so the worshipper can properly serve God (9:14). The kinds of service and sacrifice mentioned in 13:1-7 and 15-17 are the means by which Christ-followers can please God (cf. 11:6).

The sacrifice that the readers are to offer as part of their acceptable service is the "sacrifice of praise" (13:15). The author defines this sacrifice; it is the fruit of lips that confess God's name. This definition is extended in the next verse when the author exhorts readers to do good and share with others because "by such sacrifices God is pleased" (v. 16).² Immediately following is an exhortation for the readers to obey their leaders and not make their task difficult (v. 17). This aspect of the structure of vv. 15-17 brings the function of 13:1-7 into focus. Just as the themes of

² It is worth observing that the word translated "do good" is εὐποιᾶ and refers not to generally good moral behavior but to beneficence. The author here uses synonyms to encourage his readers not to neglect giving to others and sharing their possessions. As was suggested in Chapter Five, the readers seem to be well-to-do members of the community.

acceptable service and pleasing sacrifice parallel one another in 12:28 and 13:15-16, so too do the seemingly general exhortations of 13:1-7 and those in 13:15-17. They are partially parallel in content but fully parallel in function. In 13:1 the author does not abruptly change subjects. Instead he begins to specify the practical means by which he expects his readers to "acceptably render [cultic] service to God." The exhortations of 13:1-7 and vv. 15-17 both serve to define what it means to acceptably offer sacrifice to God now that the sacrifices of the Levitical cultus have been rendered redundant. The service and sacrifice that will please God consist of such things as letting brotherly love continue (13:1), showing hospitality (13:2), remembering those in prison (13:3), keeping marriage undefiled (13:4), being content with what one has (13:5),³ imitating the faith of former leaders (13:7), confessing God's name (13:15), doing good by sharing one's possessions with others (13:16) and obeying the group's current leaders (13:17). Paul also speaks of these sorts of actions as forms of cultic service and sacrifice (Phil 4:18; Rom 12:1; cf. 1 Peter 2:5). While the author of Hebrews is not unique in this, we should pay careful attention to the important role this plays in his argument. Jesus as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek offered gifts and sacrifices (8:3) that supersede the gifts and sacrifices of the Levitical High Priest. In the same way Christ-followers are to offer these gifts and sacrifices which supersede those which worshippers offer in the earthly sanctuary (9:9).

The extended inclusio of 12:28-13:7 and 13:15-17 links ch. 13 to the main argument of chs. 1-10 and draws implications from that argument for the recipients'

³ Commenting on vv. 1-6, Westcott wrote: "The character of the precepts suggests that the society to which they were addressed consisted of wealthy and influential members" (B.F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* [2nd ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1892; reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 429).

situation. In light of the sacrifice that has been offered by the High Priest of the new covenant, the readers no longer need to offer the sacrifices of the old covenant in order to please God. Indeed, the author earlier made the point that God was not pleased with the offerings of the old covenant. One reason why Jesus came to earth and was given a body was so he could replace the perpetual sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood with his own self-sacrifice. This is most clearly seen in the author's adapted quotation of Psalm 39:7-8 (LXX) and his commentary on it in 10:5-10.

In 10:4 the author reaches one of the key conclusions of his preceding arguments: "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin." He uses Psalm 39, placed on the lips of Jesus, to infer from this that God is not pleased by the sacrifices and offerings of the Levitical cultus:

Therefore, coming into the world he says: "Sacrifice and offering you did not want (οὐκ ἠθέλησας), but a body you prepared for me; you were not pleased (οὐκ εὐδόκησας) with burnt offerings and sin offering." Then I said, "Behold, I have come (it is written about me in the head of the book) to do your will (τὸ θέλημά σου) O God." (Heb 10:5-7)⁴

In the next verse the author highlights that the psalm mentions θυσία, προσφορά, ὁλοκαύτωμα and περὶ ἁμαρτίας which "according to the Law are offered" (v. 8; cf. 8:4). The guilt offering and ordination offering are not mentioned (cf. Lev 7:37), but the author correctly surmises that the parallelism of the psalm is

⁴ The quotation differs from the Hebrew text in three places and extant Greek Psalms manuscripts in two. Hebrews 10:5b says "a body you prepared for me" while the Hebrew text has "ears were dug for me" (Psalm 40:7b). Extant mss of the LXX agree with Hebrews but the Gallican Psalter, which may depend on earlier LXX mss, generally agrees with the Hebrew text. Both the Hebrew and Greek mss of Psalm 40:7 (39:7 LXX) say "burnt offering and sin offering you did not demand." Hebrews has "you were not pleased" instead of "did not demand." The significance of this apparent alteration will be discussed below. Finally, in the last line Hebrews has "to do your will O God" whereas the Hebrew and LXX have "to do your will, my God, I desire." For fuller discussion of these differences, see Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Wed. G. van Soest, 1961), 43-44, 87-88, 124-30; Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1968), 172-77; Karen H. Jobes, "Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 'Misquote' of Psalm 40," *Biblica* 72 (1991): 387-96. Jobes provides a helpful comparative chart on p. 395.

designed to represent the breadth of the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus 1-7. This is clearer in the Hebrew text of the psalm in which the seemingly general "sacrifice and offering" employ common terms for the shared sacrifice (זֶבֶח)⁵ and grain offering (מִנְחָה).

The psalm is understood to mean that the Levitical sacrifices are legally abolished when Jesus offers his body as a non-Levitical sacrifice and institutes a new covenant. One reason why God did not want the Levitical sacrifices is that he was "not pleased" (οὐκ εὐδόκησας) by them (Psalm 39:7//Heb 10:6). Here the quotation of the psalm differs from the extant Greek Psalms manuscripts which instead follow the Hebrew text with "did not demand" (οὐκ ἤτησας). Karen Jobes has argued that the author adjusted the wording of the psalm to achieve phonetic assonance because he was using the rhetorical technique of paronomasia.⁶ This is not impossible but it is more likely that the author replaced ἤτησας with εὐδόκησας to bring it into conformity with the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 in 10:38: "and if he shrinks back, my soul is not pleased with him (οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχή μου ἐν αὐτῷ)." These quotations introduce the theme of God's displeasure. God is specifically displeased with two things: the Levitical sacrifices and anyone who shrinks back (here equivalent to apostasy from the Christ-community). By adjusting the quotation from Psalm 39:7 to match Habakkuk 2:4, the author alludes to a significant feature of the situation he is addressing: *the issue of Levitical sacrifice and the readers' potential apostasy are intertwined.*

⁵ This is the same category others refer to as peace offerings or welfare offerings. In Leviticus 3:1 it is referred to as a זֶבֶח שְׁלָמִים and is often referred to simply as שְׁלָמִים. However, זֶבֶח could also be used alone to refer to this particular sacrifice (e.g., Exod 23:18; 34:25; Lev 17:8; Deut 12:6, 11, 27).

⁶ Jobes, "Rhetorical Achievement," 387-96.

If Levitical sacrifice and apostasy displease God, the recipients must do that which will cause God to be pleased with them. The words which most easily convey this idea are those related to εὐάρεστος, not the non-negated forms of words related to εὐδοκία.⁷ Thus the quotation in 10:5-7 (and its reiteration in 10:8) and 10:37-38 anticipate the theme of pleasing God (11:6; 13:21), specifically in service and sacrifice (12:28, 13:16). Even though the subsequent passages use terms related to εὐάρεστος the catchword association would not have been lost on the original readers. But there is also a further strong link between 10:5-10 and ch. 13. As interpreted by the author of Hebrews, Psalm 39 says that God did not (or does not) *want* (θέλω) the sacrifices of the Levitical system but that Jesus came to do God's *will* (θέλημα).⁸ The author deduces from this parallelism that it was necessary for the sacrifices which God does not desire to be abolished in order for Jesus to do God's will (10:9). The abolishment spoken of here refers to the legal abrogation of the cult that precedes its physical demise since, regardless of when one dates Hebrews, the physical abolishment of the cultus is subsequent to the sacrifice of Jesus.

Jesus did God's will by offering his body as a non-Levitical sacrifice that will sanctify the people of God once and for all (10:10). The readers are to do God's will in a similar manner. This becomes clear a little later in the chapter: "You have need of endurance so that you may receive the promise, having done the will of God (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες)" (10:36). The author returns to this theme in 13:21 when he prays that God will equip his readers in every good thing "to do his will"

⁷ This can be seen by comparing the functions of the words which Louw and Nida group together under the semantic domain "Acceptable To, To Be Pleased With." See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), §25.85-25.98 (pp. 1.299-300).

⁸ In the psalm quotation the verbs are aorists and were translated above as past tense. However, it is also possible that they can be taken in a timeless manner.

(εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ). The wording of both 10:36 and 13:21 echo the statement from Psalm 39 which was placed on the lips of Jesus: "to do your will O God" (τοῦ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεὸς τὸ θέλημά σου) (Psalm 39:8//Heb 10:7). The Son came to do God's will; his "brothers," the "sons" who are being brought to glory (2:10-11), are called to do God's will in an analogous manner. The use of hook words and verbal echoes shows that 12:28, 13:15-16 and 13:21 hearken back to 10:5-10. They do not summarize the earlier passage but concretely apply it to the readers' situation. Just as Jesus offered his body as a non-Levitical sacrifice in accordance with God's will, so the readers are to do God's will by offering their own non-Levitical sacrifices (cf. 13:1-7, 15-17). In this way they will offer the kinds of sacrifices that do please God.

In Chapter Seven it was observed that the author intends for his audience to imitate the faithful actions of the exemplars of faith in ch. 11 (cf. 6:12). It is not accidental that the first of these exemplars is Abel, who though dead "still speaks" (11:4; cf. 12:24). Abel represents the person who by faith offers the "greater sacrifice" (πλείονα θυσίαν). He is portrayed as having offered gifts which God commended (μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ). Abel's sacrifice and gifts, moreover, were offered outside the framework of the Levitical cultus. Like Rahab, Abel is both exemplar and precedent for what the author wants his readers to do. In imitation of Abel, they are to offer the "greater sacrifice" and the kinds of gifts that God commends. These are defined by the inclusio of 12:28-13:7 and 13:15-17. If they are faithful to do this they will prove themselves "sons" who receive what is promised (11:39; cf. 2:10; 12:5-11).

Craig Koester has correctly recognized that Hebrews 12:28-29, 13:15-16 and 13:21 communicate the theme of the peroration. He is also correct when he says that

the exhortations in these verses form "a compelling conclusion to the treatment of priesthood and sacrifice" earlier in the epistle.⁹ However, he identifies the theme merely as "worship or service pleasing to God."¹⁰ This is a great improvement over some of the anachronistic suggestions that have been offered, but the theme is more specific than this. The main theme of 12:28-13:21 is *sacrifice and cultic service* that will please God. When this is understood in relation to the epistle's earlier arguments it is difficult to avoid concluding that the author is drawing an implicit contrast. On the one hand there are the Levitical sacrifices his readers believe are required to please God. In contrast are those which he defines: "for by such sacrifices (τοιαύταις γὰρ θυσίαις) God is pleased" (13:16). The author of Hebrews argues that Christ's sacrifice institutes a new covenant and brings the old covenant of Levitical sacrifice to an end. The way to acceptably serve God now is by offering the sacrifices of the new covenant; the sacrifices of the old covenant can be safely left behind.

Strange Teachings and the Sacrifice of Praise

Hebrews 13:9 makes clear reference to the readers' situation but has long puzzled scholars. It states:

Do not be carried away by all kinds of unfamiliar teachings (διδαχαῖς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις), for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by meats (βρώμασιν) by means of which those who walk [in them] (οἱ περιπατοῦντες) have not benefited (οὐκ ὠφελήθησαν).

Most interpreters understand the admonishment against being "carried away by all kinds of unfamiliar teachings" ("strange teachings" in many translations) as a warning against some kind of doctrinal heresy. Yet, nowhere else in the epistle does

⁹ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 555.

¹⁰ Koester, *Hebrews*, 555.

the author refer to heresy or even hint that it might be part of the problem he is addressing. This warning appears suddenly and seems to have no relation to the surrounding context except, maybe, with verse 10. Then, just as soon as he has issued his stark warning, the author moves on to another topic. The wording of the warning appears to point to one of the author's major concerns about his audience's situation, but the way he quickly moves away from it suggests otherwise. Hebrews 13:9 is itself perceived as rather strange and foreign to the epistle.

In reality, however, Hebrews 13:9 is not difficult or enigmatic. Nor does it raise a concern that is unrelated to the surrounding context or the argument of the epistle as a whole. Two primary reasons account for why scholars have been unable to see this. First, once again the misguided assumption that the readers must be located in the Diaspora has served as a gremlin in their exegesis. Many commentators will intuitively link 13:9 with the next verse's "altar from which those who minister in the tent have no right to eat." The most straightforward way to understand these verses is to take them as referring to something related to sacrifices offered in Jerusalem. But that is ruled out of consideration since "everyone knows" that the readers cannot be located in Palestine. Second, scholars automatically see in the *διδασκαίς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις* a reference to doctrinal heresy similar to the heresies addressed in other NT epistles, especially Colossians. Other possibilities are not even considered. In contrast to the predominant way of reading this passage, I maintain that the teachings mentioned here are halakhic in nature and pertain to proper sacrificial regulations regarding shared sacrifices. To effectively demonstrate this it is helpful to begin by recalling one aspect of Hebrews' Second Temple Jewish context.

Jewish worship was centered on the Temple. "The cult of the temple was sacrifice; i.e. the slaughter, roasting and eating of animals."¹¹ During the Second Temple period there was controversy between various Jewish groups about each aspect of sacrifice: which animals were slaughtered, how they were slaughtered, how they were prepared, who was permitted to offer and eat them, how much time was allowed for eating them, and what to do with portions that were not consumed before the time limit expired. 4QMMT provides a convenient illustration of this. Numerous of its precepts are regulations about how sacrifices should be prepared and stored, who may eat them and by when they must be eaten (esp. see B 1-13; B 36-38; B 49-54; B 64-68; B 71-72).¹² Often these precepts are fragmentary, but the deep concern with maintaining the sanctity of the sacrificial foods is obvious. While some of these precepts apply only to priests, many are also relevant to the laity. In fact, the well-being of the laity in these matters seems to be a particular concern of MMT. Twice in the context of discussing the shared sacrifices it is urged that priests should take care to ensure that the people follow the prescribed regulations "so as not to cause the people to bear punishment" (B 12-13; B 26-27a). The writer and those who used MMT believed that the improper handling or consumption of the holy foods would bring punishment upon the people. Presumably, they also held the view that the sacrificial foods brought benefits of some kind to the worshipper, provided that all of the regulations governing the sacrifices and their consumption were duly

¹¹ Shaye J.D. Cohen, "The Temple and the Synagogue," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3 *The Early Roman Period* (ed. William Horbury, W.D. Davies, John Sturdy; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 301.

¹² For a discussion of some of these regulations, see Robert A. Kugler, "Rewriting Rubrics: Sacrifice and the Religion of Qumran," in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 90-112.

followed.¹³ Of course, all of the Jewish groups would have included this proviso, but what those regulations were, and how they were to be implemented were the subject of debate.

The last chapter observed that halakhic debates were prominent factors in the origin and self-definition of Jewish groups in the Second Temple period. Teachings pertaining to purity and sacrifice which were perceived as erroneous could be opposed with as much vigor as any of the later Christian heresiologists displayed. This is prominently illustrated by the Qumran group's polemics against the Pharisees. They derogatorily refer to the Pharisees as דורשי הלכות, "false interpreters" or "seekers of smooth things" (1QH 10.15, 32 [formerly 2.15, 32]; 4QpNah 3-4 I 2, 7; CD 1.18). Here the word הלכות is a pun on the word הלכות (halakhot), "laws." Whereas the Pharisees fashioned themselves as interpreters of the halakhot, the Qumran group rejected their creative legal exegesis because often it was designed to make obedience to the laws easy. Thus, it was said of the Pharisees אשר בחלמוד שקרם, "that their teaching is their falsehood" (4QpNah 3-4 ii 8). It is usually assumed that when the New Testament writers allude to teachings which they perceive as false, these teachings are primarily theological in nature. But in light of what we learn from the Scrolls, teachings of a halakhic nature must also be considered, especially in any text written to a Palestinian community.

¹³ What might that benefit have been? The axiom is that "The Altar makes holy whatsoever is prescribed as its due" (*m. Zebah*. 9.1). It is possible that the benefit nothing more than simply getting that holiness inside oneself. A character in one of Chaim Potock's novels explains this well with regard to Hasidic practices: "The Hasidim believed that the tzaddik was a superhuman link between themselves and God. Every act of his and every word he spoke was holy. *Even the food he touched became holy. For example, they would grab the food scraps he left on his plate and eat them, because the food had become holy through his touch, and they wanted some of this holiness inside themselves*" (*The Chosen* [London: Penguin, 1970], 111). *Mutatis mutandis* with regard to the food sanctified by the altar.

The description of the teachings in Hebrews 13:9 as ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις is almost always taken to imply that the author has a strange or outlandish theological heresy in view.¹⁴ This interpretation is given some credence in light of Colossians 2:16-18. There various Jewish practices are referred to as "a shadow of the things to come" whereas the substance is in Christ. This statement has marked affinities with the overall argumentation of Hebrews and its claim that certain Jewish practices were imposed only until Christ appeared (9:10). But this similarity does not necessarily mean that Colossians and Hebrews address similar situations. 1 Corinthians 9:13 and 10:18 also say things very similar to Hebrews but address a different kind of situation than Colossians does. The authors of these texts apply similar theological points from the common stock of the Christ-movement to diverse situations.

The common interpretation of Hebrews 13:9 reads more into ξένος than is required. It may refer only to teachings that are foreign, unfamiliar or simply innovations from what the readers had been taught. In particular, there is good reason to believe that halakhic innovations are in view. The statement "not by meats by means of which those who walk have not benefited" (οὐ βρώμασιν, ἐν οἷς οὐκ ὠφελήθησαν οἱ περιπατοῦντες) comes across as rather awkward for a reference to theological heresy. What does it mean to "walk" in meats (or foods)? While walking is a common metaphor for moral conduct both within and outside the New Testament, that does not really fit here. Instead, as in Acts 21:21, it refers to the observance of Jewish customs. Attridge observes that the language is "reminiscent of

¹⁴ E.g., Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 707; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 376-77; and many others.

the Jewish designation of observance of the Torah as *halakhah*.¹⁵ DeSilva notices this too and points out that *halakhah* comes from the verb הלך, "to walk."¹⁶ Neither of these commentators, however, allows the teachings in view to really be halakhic in nature. Why? Because their commitment to a Diaspora destination prevents them from allowing the "meats" or "foods" (βρώμασιν) to refer to Jewish sacrifices. Yet, the very next sentence states, "We have an altar from which those who minister in the tent have no right to eat" (13:10)!

Hebrews 13:9-10 makes a straightforward contrast. On the one hand there are the shared sacrifices which worshippers eat, the "meats" or "foods."¹⁷ According to our author, eating these sacrifices has never benefited those who are scrupulously concerned about preparing and eating them in accordance with a particular form of *halakhah*. On the other hand there is a sacrifice which not even the priests serving at the altar of the Temple can eat, the sin offering of Jesus (vv. 11-13). Because the Christ-community has this superior sacrifice, they do not need to derive benefit from the shared sacrifices, much less be concerned about halakhic teachings regarding those sacrifices which have recently been introduced (either in the running of the Temple or within the Christ-community).

Three contextual factors confirm this interpretation. First, in the immediately subsequent verses the author uses camp terminology which, as we saw in the last chapter, was employed by other Jewish writers in halakhic discussions of purity and sacrifice. Second, earlier in the epistle the author anticipates the reference to foods.

¹⁵ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), *Hebrews*, 394.

¹⁶ David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 497 n. 40.

¹⁷ This is recognized by Westcott, *Hebrews*, 437.

The time when the earthly sanctuary is still standing is described as a time when "gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper (τὸν λατρεύοντα)" (9:9). Rather, they only "deal with meats (βρώμασιν) and drink and various ablutions (βαπτισμοῖς), regulations for the body imposed until the time of restoration" (9:10). The meats or foods mentioned here are clearly related to the gifts and sacrifices offered in the Temple. And here they are said to be unable to perfect the conscience of the worshipper, just as those mentioned in 13:9 do not benefit those who walk in them. These two passages have the exact same kinds of foods in view, sacrifices. Lastly, 13:9-10 and 13:15-16 form a bracket around the analogy between the actions of the High Priest outside the camp, Jesus' death and the call for the readers to leave Jerusalem (13:11-14). In 13:15 the readers are told to offer a "sacrifice of praise." The author defines what this sacrifice is to be for his audience. After elaborating on the definition he says "for by *such* (τοιαύταις γὰρ) sacrifices God is pleased" (13:16). The demonstrative pronoun is emphatic, pointing, as was suggested earlier, to a contrast with sacrifices that do not please God. The immediate contrast is the reference to meats on the other side of the bracket in 13:9. The reference to the "sacrifice of praise" (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) and its explicit definition also point in this direction.

In the Old Testament the category of shared sacrifice is subdivided between the thank offering, votive offering and welfare offering. In the LXX the thank offering is consistently referred to as the sacrifice of praise. For example, the repentant Manasseh is said to have "restored the altar of the LORD and offered on it sacrifices of well-being and praise (θυσίαν σωτηρίου καὶ αἰνέσεως)" (2 Chron 33:16). In Psalm 49 God declares that he does not eat sacrifices and thus does not want burnt

offerings. It is better for people to "Offer to God a sacrifice of praise (θῦσον τῷ θεῷ θυσίαν αἰνέσεως), and pay your vows to the Most High" (Psalm 49:14; cf. v. 23). In other words, instead of sinning and presenting the appropriate burnt offering, God would prefer for his people to offer thank offerings and votive offerings that they can feast upon. The "sacrifice of praise" is not, as usually assumed, a reference to praising God *per se*, but to a particular kind of animal sacrifice. But it was a joyous occasion when one offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving and it was attended by festivities and celebration. The singing of songs of praise was such an integral part of the thanksgiving sacrifice that it became known as the "sacrifice of praise" (i.e. "the sacrifice accompanied by praise") in Greek-speaking communities. The specific type of shared sacrifices that are in view in Hebrews 13:9 seem to be thank offerings. The author of Hebrews agrees that Christ-followers should continue to offer sacrifices of praise, but he redefines them as "the fruit of lips that confess his name" and various good deeds.

The idea that "the fruit of the lips" could be considered a legitimate replacement for actual sacrifice was not without precedent. The Rule of the Community, for example, speaks of atonement being made without burnt offerings and the fats of sacrifice. Instead, "the offering of the lips in compliance with the decree will be like the pleasant aroma of justice and the correctness of behavior will be acceptable like a freewill offering" (1QS 9.4-5).¹⁸ For the Qumran community this was a temporary replacement due to the corruption of the Temple and priesthood. In

¹⁸ On the idea of prayer, praise, good deeds, Torah study, etc. replacing literal sacrifice both before and after the destruction of the Temple, see further Cohen, "Temple and Synagogue," 316-19; Everett Ferguson, "Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and Its Environment," *ANRW* (II 23.2), 1151-89; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Community without Temple: The Qumran Community's Withdrawal from the Jerusalem Temple," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple* (ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 267-83.

their eschatological vision God would eventually restore the cult to its pristine purity and literal sacrifices would again be offered. The author of Hebrews argues in the opposite direction. The sacrificial cult has come to a permanent end now that God has moved in history to redeem his people through Christ. Soon the readers would see this vividly demonstrated. For, "what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear" (8:13).

Summary

There are, of course, many aspects of the epistle's argumentation other than sacrifice that can be related to the situation addressed by the author. But the foregoing is sufficient to confirm the following observation made by Andrew Chester:

The categories of priesthood and cult are forced on the writer of Hebrews; it is not that he chooses them, from a number of possibilities, because they seem especially suitable. It is the fact that these categories have formed the central focus and frame of reference for the community the writer is addressing, and that this community is in danger of lapsing from its faith in Christ, that compels the writer to use these categories to explain the significance of Christ.¹⁹

The call to leave Jerusalem was difficult for the readers to accept. The causes of this difficulty were undoubtedly complex and almost certainly included economic, political, familial and other social factors. But the one factor that seems to have been dominant was the addressees' commitment to being faithful, Christ-following Jews who upheld the commandments of the Torah. Until the time when they received the word of exhortation they perceived no fundamental tension between being faithful Jews and loyal Christ-followers. The implications of obeying the oracle, however,

¹⁹ A.N. Chester, "Hebrews: The Final Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice and Redemption* (ed. S.W. Sykes; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 59.

caused a clash between their fundamental identity as Jews and their nested identity as Christ-followers. Because the status of the Torah and its institutions was certain, their identity as followers of Christ was in jeopardy. But, the author argues, the word spoken through Jesus surpasses that of the prophets, including the Law mediated to Moses by angels. Why? Because Jesus is the Son and holds the superior position in God's house. The author argues that the way to maintain both aspects of their identity lies precisely in leaving the city and its cultus behind. Christ has offered the final bloody sacrifice required by God. The continuing sacrifices of the Levitical cultus are redundant. Those who choose to hold on to them rather than Christ will find themselves, like Esau, trading a rich inheritance for a paltry meal with no opportunity to regain what they surrender (12:16). Because Scripture points to a new covenant, the Jew faithful to the Law and the Prophets will be the one who leaves the institutions of the old covenant behind. From now on faithful Jews will be those who offer the sacrifices of confessing God's name through Christ and doing good deeds.

Situating Hebrews in the History of Earliest 'Christianity'

The main findings of this thesis clearly entail that the Temple is standing. The fact that some of the community's leaders have been killed and others are in prison suggests a time after the death of James in 62 C.E.. We can therefore date Hebrews to the period between 62 and 70 C.E.. Josephus' portrait of events in Jerusalem after the death of James depicts precisely the kind of conditions in which we might expect a situation like that addressed in Hebrews to arise.

James was murdered following the death of Festus in 62 during the interregnum before Albinus arrived as the new procurator. Later that year at the feast of Tabernacles a common farmer named Jesus son of Ananias began crying out against Jerusalem and the Temple (*B.J.* 6.300). He is said to have gone about the city day and night crying out: "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" (*B.J.* 6.301, Whiston translation). After a while some prominent citizens had him whipped in an effort to make him cease. He continued and was brought before Albinus who had him severely whipped again. As Josephus tells the story, with every stroke of the whip Jesus ben Ananias cried out, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" (*B.J.* 6.304). Eventually he was released as a madman. He continued to utter his woes against the city daily and was especially loud during festivals. According to Josephus, he did this for an astonishing seven years and five months. His woes against the city and Temple ended only when he was struck by a catapulted stone at the height of the Roman siege (*B.J.* 6.309).

Albinus is described as having been a corrupt official who exacerbated the tensions that were coming to a boil in Palestine. But things grew even worse two years later. In 64 C.E. Albinus was replaced by Gessius Florus and over the next two years the corruption and ineptitude of the Roman administration reached new lows. Things became so bad that many people left Judea and moved to foreign provinces (*B.J.* 2.279). It increasingly became clear to a large number of people that the prospect of open rebellion was all but certain. Those who respected the power of Rome could already anticipate what the outcome of that would be. Thus, Josephus is credible

when he reports that numerous people anticipated the city's destruction even before the war began (*B.J.* 2.649-50).

While some moved away from Judea before the outbreak of hostilities, others did so afterwards. As might be expected, the ease by which people could leave waxed and waned depending on the tides of war, the attitudes of the combatants and the financial resources of those who wanted to flee. In Jerusalem the situation was in many ways worse than for other parts of the country because the city became divided between three armed factions and a large number of citizens who were unaligned with any of them. Many who were not aligned with the armed factions hoped that a settlement could be reached with the Romans. This attitude was held by many of the well-to-do who hoped that they could make it through the war with their lives and property intact. Josephus reports several examples of people fleeing from Jerusalem after it was besieged by the Romans and as the siege reached its final stages the wealthy were increasingly among those who found ways to leave the city (e.g., *B.J.* 4.397; 5.421-24; 5.450; 5.567).

When did the recipients of Hebrews first receive the word of exhortation warning them to leave Jerusalem? Given the portrait Josephus paints, anytime after the murder of James and the other leaders in the Jerusalem church would be plausible. Jesus ben Ananias began uttering his woes against the city in the autumn of 62, so it is entirely possible that prophets within the Christ-community began saying something similar at that time or shortly thereafter.²⁰

²⁰ It is possible that Jesus ben Ananias was himself a member of the Christ-community and that his woes against the city were related to the death of James earlier in the year. As intriguing as the possibility is, it will not be explored here.

When did the author write to address the concerns related to obeying the oracle? The fact that the addressees are reticent to obey suggests that they feel there is a reasonable chance that they will make it through the tumultuous times ahead safe and with their property intact (recall that they seem to be well-to-do). Josephus indicates that some among the upper classes in Jerusalem held this view until the final stages of the siege in the summer of 70. But the possibility of sending correspondence abroad with the reasonable expectation of receiving a reply would have ended before then. It is difficult to know how long before this opportunity would have ended for a person of financial means. But with the cessation of the Roman offensive after the death of Nero in 68, it is conceivable that one would consider it feasible to send a letter to Italy as late as the summer of 69. (The correspondents would not have known when the offensive would resume or how quickly the Romans would besiege the city.)

As for the earliest possible date, time must be allowed for developments to occur within the Jerusalem church after the loss of their core leadership and for news of the situation to reach the author in Italy. Josephus' only indication of when James was killed is that it happened during the interval between the death of Festus and Arrival of Albinus. Albinus was in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn of 62 or shortly thereafter (*B.J.* 6.305), so we can assume that James died a few months earlier. Eusebius preserves an account by Hegesippus which says James was killed during Passover (*H.E.* 2.23.11). This is not implausible chronologically. Thus, the earliest plausible date for the writer of Hebrews to receive news of the death of James would be late in 62. It seems more reasonable, though, that at least a few months would have elapsed after the death of James before obedience to the new

leaders would have become a serious enough problem for someone to send a letter to Italy prompted by this issue. So it is more reasonable to set the earliest possible date in either the summer or autumn of 63, depending on the mode of travel and how well the journey went. So Hebrews would have been written sometime between the Autumn of 63 and late 69 or even early 70 (in which case it most likely did not reach the recipients).

The epistle provides two clues that may narrow the date further. First, the author expects to travel from Italy and be with the recipients, presumably in Jerusalem (13:23). (It is possible that he owned property there or had family in the city and wanted to attend to matters himself in response to the oracle.) If the author knew that military operations would be forced to cease after the death of Nero, then this could be as late as 68. In late 69 or early 70 people were still traveling from foreign lands to offer sacrifice at the Temple (*B.J.* 5.15-17), so this is not impossible. Nonetheless, a date much earlier is more likely, either before the war or in its early years. The second clue is the warning in 13:9. There seems to be an effort by someone to persuade the readers to accept halakhic innovations pertaining to sacrifice that the author warns against. We know from Josephus that the event igniting hostilities was the cessation of sacrifice on behalf of the emperor. Interestingly, Josephus describes this as introducing a "strange/foreign innovation" to their religious worship (καινοτομεῖν θρησκείαν ξένην) (*B.J.* 2.414). The reference to διδαχαῖς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις in Hebrews 13:9 may suggest a reference to other innovations related to the sacrificial cult that were introduced after the beginning of the war. If so, then Hebrews was written no earlier than late 66, though this is far from certain.

Finally, some mention should be made of the Pella flight tradition. Eusebius reports that before the war began members of the Jerusalem church "were commanded by an oracle (χρησμὸν) given by revelation" (cf. Heb 12:25) to abandon Jerusalem and relocate to Pella in the Decapolis (*H.E.* 3.5.5). Epiphanius records the same tradition and says that members of the Jerusalem church settled in Pella "because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem" (Χριστοῦ φήσαντος καταλεῖψαι τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα) (*Pan.* 29.7.8; cf. *Pan.* 30.2.7; *W&M*, 15). What Eusebius and Epiphanius record corroborates the fact that Christ-followers in Jerusalem received an oracle warning them to leave the city. Hebrews does not, of course, give any indication as to where they should go (though 11:13-15 may hint at a foreign province). It is possible that they were instructed to go to Pella as later reported.

It is probably safe to say that most scholars who mention the Pella tradition accept its reliability. However, S.G.F. Brandon, Gerd Lüdemann, Jozef Verheyden and a few others have argued vigorously against the historicity of the tradition.²¹ It has been defended against these criticisms by J. Julius Scott, Sidney Sowers, Barbara Gray, John Gunther, Ray Pritz, Craig Koester, Jürgen Wehnert (cautiously), Edwin Yamauchi, Vicky Balabanski and P.H.R. van Houwelingen.²² Scholars who have

²¹ S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1957), 167-84; idem, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 208-220; Gerd Lüdemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella Tradition" in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. E.P. Sanders; 2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 1.161-73; idem, "Appendix: The Successors of Earliest Jerusalem Christianity: An Analysis of the Pella Tradition," in Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 200-13; Jozef Verheyden, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella," *ETL* 66/4 (1990): 368-84; idem, *De vlucht van de christenen naar Pella: Onderzoek van het getuigenis van Eusebius en Epiphanius* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1988); Milton Carl Moreland, "Jerusalem Imagined: Rethinking Earliest Christian Claims to the Hebrew Epic (Luke-Acts)" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1999), 250-55.

²² J. Julius Scott, "The Effects of the Fall of Jerusalem on Christianity," *Proceedings, The Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society* 3 (1983): 149-60; Sidney Sowers, "The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight," *TZ* 26 (1970): 305-320; M. Simon, "La Migration à Pella: Légende ou réalité?" *RSR* 60 (1972): 37-54; Barbara C. Gray, "The Movements of the Jerusalem Church During the First Jewish War," *JEH* 24/1

assessed this debate remain divided. For instance, Martin Hengel is confident of the tradition's reliability,²³ Bastiaan Van Elderen thinks it is very plausible²⁴ and Robert Grant confidently rejects it.²⁵ Robert Van Voorst does not commit himself one way or the other, but he is confident that the tradition is much older than Eusebius, believing it to be referred to in the *Ascents of James* 1.37.2 and 1.39.3.²⁶ Independent of any of the findings of this thesis, in my judgement there is good reason to believe that Eusebius and Epiphanius report a reliable tradition about the Jerusalem church. The arguments typically cited against the tradition are often weak and sometimes open to serious methodological critique. Space will not permit me to discuss my reasons for this judgement, but it is not necessary that I do so here.

Obviously, a successful defense of the Pella tradition would corroborate an important finding of this thesis. Likewise, the findings of this thesis give credence to one part of the flight tradition. Readers will no doubt have wondered why the Pella tradition has not been mentioned until now, especially in light of the admission that I think the tradition can be defended on its own grounds. The reason is simple. The flight tradition has not been mentioned in order to accentuate the fact that my arguments are completely independent of it. Whether one thinks Eusebius preserved

(1973): 1-7; John J. Gunther, "The Fate of the Jerusalem Church," *TZ* 29/2 (1973): 81-94; Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 122-27; Craig Koester, "The Origen and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 90-106; Jürgen Wehnert, "Die Auswanderung der Jerusalemer Christen nach Pella—historisches Faktum oder theologische Konstruktion?" *ZKG* 102/2 (1991): 231-55; Edwin Yamauchi, "Christians and the Jewish Revolts against Rome," *Fides et Historia* 23/2 (1991): 11-22; Vicky Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache* (SNTSMS 97; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 101-34; P.H.R. van Houwelingen, "Fleeing Forward: The Departing of Christian from Jerusalem to Pella," *WTJ* 65/2 (2003): 181-200.

²³ Martin Hengel, *The Zealots* (trans. David Smith; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 301.

²⁴ Bastiaan Van Elderen, "Early Christianity in Transjordan," *TynB* 45/1 (1994): 107.

²⁵ Robert M. Grant, review of Jozef Verheyden, *De vlucht van de christenen naar Pella* in *JTS* NS 41 (1990): 664-65.

²⁶ Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (SBLDS 112; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 94, 100-101.

a reliable tradition about the Jerusalem church or invented a story for theological purposes that was later picked up by Epiphaneus, this has no bearing on my findings. Pella has not been mentioned in order to highlight the independence of the arguments presented here. They stand on their own merits. I believe they will also withstand scrutiny.

Conclusion

Hebrews is not like the rest of the New Testament. It is an epistle concerned with such things as sacrifice, sanctuaries, priesthood and purification. This strikes many readers as vestiges from the Old Testament era. Hebrews is strange and strangely out of place in the New Testament. Scholarship has reached a stalemate in the investigation of the epistle's background and the situation it addresses. As a result, many avenues of inquiry into Hebrews that could shed new light on the early Christ-movement and its place within Judaism remain impassible. Very few are optimistic about the prospect of making significant progress on any of the core issues of NT *Einleitung*. Hebrews remains, as Feld describes it, a "kaum lösbares Rätsel," a scarcely solvable riddle.¹ For all practical purposes the riddle is considered intractable. Because of the uncertainty about the epistle's setting and the dim prospects of this changing, Hebrews suffers neglect in comparison with other parts of the New Testament.² Hopefully this can now change.

This thesis has argued that the riddle of this conspicuously *alttestamentliche* epistle is not intractable after all. Nor is Hebrews a riddle simply due to lack of evidence. Scholarly habit is also an important reason why Hebrews has remained an intractable riddle for so long. Hebrews specialists have continued to perpetuate

¹ Helmut Feld, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Erträge der Forschung; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 1.

² Cf. Peter Walker, "A Place for Hebrews? Contexts for a First-Century Sermon," in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting* (ed. P.J. Williams, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 232.

anachronistic assumptions about the nature of first-century Judaism and 'Christianity' that distort their interpretation of the evidence that we have. They have also been negligent in examining Hebrews within its proper Second Temple Jewish context. Thus, many clues have either been misinterpreted or missed altogether. Contemporary scholarship on Hebrews displays broad consensus on a number of issues pertaining to the genre, destination and purpose of Hebrews. Unfortunately, the consensus is demonstrably mistaken on all but one issue (non-Pauline authorship).

Hebrews is not a sermon, it is an epistle. It was not written to members of the Christ-movement in Rome. Rather, it was written to members of the Jerusalem church who had received an oracle warning them to leave the city before it would be destroyed. Knowing these simple facts opens many avenues of inquiry into this epistle. It also opens the way for bringing Hebrews to bear upon the history and development of earliest Palestinian 'Christianity' and subsequent Jewish Christianity.

In 1931 as the Roman hypothesis was solidifying its dominance among biblical scholars, C.H. Turner defiantly reasserted the classical view. He stated, "Even more admirably does the Epistle to the Hebrews fit into known conditions of time and place, when the Christian community of Jerusalem had to face the issue squarely between the abandonment of their Christianity and the abandonment of their city. Criticism which shuts its eyes to such patent historical probabilities stands self-condemned."³ Time has proven him correct.

³ Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, *Catholic and Apostolic* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1931), 81-82.

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